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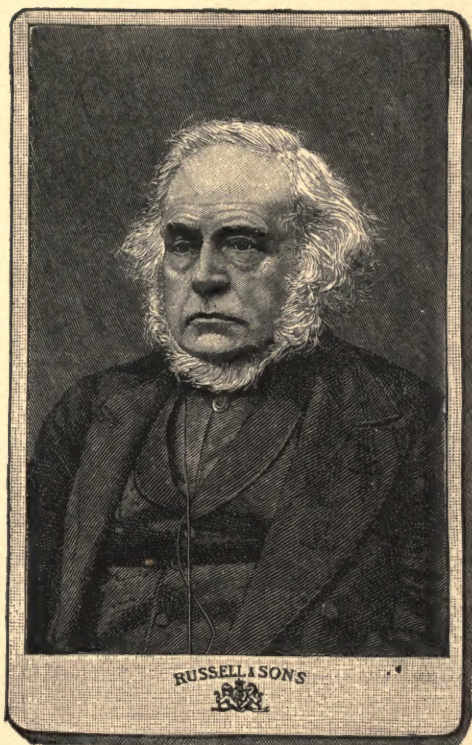
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THE RIGHT HON. JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

LIFE AND TIMES

OF THE RIGHT HON.

JOHN BRIGHT

BY

WILLIAM ROBERTSON

AUTHOR OF "OLD AND NEW ROCHDALE."

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED

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LIFE AND TIMES

OF THE

RIGHT HON. JOHN BRIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

ROCHDALE AND THE BRIGHT FAMILY.

Bright's Residence—Schools in Rochdale—Its Public Library—Its Politics—Its Industries—Its Surroundings—Lord Byron and Rochdale—Origin of the Name "One Ash"—Derivation of the name Bright—Mr. Bright's Ancestors—Men of Genius and their Parentage.

ROCHDALE, one of the most prosaic towns in the north of England, has a spot which, like Mecca and the Lourdes shrine, attracts hundreds of pilgrims annually. That centre of attraction is the now classic "One Ash," the residence of the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P. To the bleak and unpromising region of Cronkeyshaw Common flock visitors from far-off lands, at all times and all seasons, anxious to see, if not the person of England's great patriot, at least the home of his boyhood, and the topographical surroundings of his domestic life.

For many years there has been a continual stream of emigration going on from Germany to America through a system of conscription being enforced in "Vaterland," and many of these exiles, in the route from Hull to Liverpool, pass through the Rochdale station. When they hear the word Rochdale pronounced, it has been noted that some exclaim in their native language, "Oh, this is the birthplace of John Bright." Their wistful glances show that they are anxious to obtain at least a rapid and superficial survey of the town and its suburbs. This absorbing interest in Rochdale is manifested not only by strangers from all parts of the United Kingdom, but by natives from remote countries. Indeed, it is not uncommon to hear of Americans, Frenchmen, and English colonists visiting Rochdale, solely for the purpose of satisfying their

curiosity, and seeing the lowly roof which shelters the foremost of England's orators, that they might carry its picture home, "to feed their fancy when far away." The place in which such an intellect resides, with its surroundings, has a thousand pleasant associations.

A view of Rochdale from the railway would not give a favourable impression, nor would a stroll through its streets predispose strangers to consider it as a pleasant town to dwell in. They might, however, discover that with its 15,000 houses lying in a valley on each side of the river Roach, and with its clean and efficiently-sewered streets, it was propitious to health. The Registrar-General's reports prove it to be one of the healthiest towns in Lancashire. Its Town Hall, a fine Gothic structure, has been pronounced second in point of artistic elegance in the kingdom. Its churches number nine, Catholic chapels two, and Nonconformist chapels twenty-five; and the majority might be described as handsome structures. With each of these places of worship is connected a Sabbath school, in which children are trained for the religious services which succeed it.

The town is remarkable for its provisions for secular instruction. The elementary and endowed schools number fifty-four, and out of a population of 69,750 about 13,000 children are under instruction. A prominent building, which would not escape observation on account of its elevated position and fine frontage, is the Equitable Pioneers' Central Stores in Toad Lane, a fitting monument of the birthplace and progress of this modern institution, which has been so beneficial to the welfare of the working class, intellectually as well as commercially. It has a library of 15,035 volumes, and nineteen news-rooms. The inhabitants also possess a Public Library, which contains 31,600 volumes. These educational advantages have doubtless aided in the intellectual development of the residents.

A network of political clubs, both Liberal and Conservative, extends over the borough, and they have no small share of influence in forming the views of those within their sphere. But Rochdale is an ultra-Liberal town; for the last fifty years it has been represented in the House of Commons by five Liberals, and for a short time by two Conservatives. Seventy years ago it was a decided Tory town, there being at that time only three Dissenting chapels, namely, a Wesleyan, a Baptist, and a Presbyterian. Nearly the whole of the inhabitants were thus church-people, their places of worship being

St. Chad's and St. Mary's churches. Since that period, however, so Liberal have they grown in politics, that they never have had a Conservative mayor, and at the present time there are only six Conservatives in the Town Council, while the Liberals number thirty-three; moreover, while there are ten Conservative members of the Board of Guardians, the Liberals have fourteen, notwithstanding that outside the borough the Conservative electors are more numerous than within the limits of the town. Even the Conservatives of Rochdale are in advance in their political creed, and their prominent leaders advocate free trade. The Liberals stand in the foremost ranks of political enlightenment, for they have had the benefit of the teachings of their distinguished townsman; and their members, Richard Cobden, W. Sharman Crawford, Edward Miall, John Fenton, and T. B. Potter, who have often, in their annual addresses, pointed out a safe course for the general good.

The artisans do not depend upon one branch of industry for a livelihood. Although the staple trade is the manufacture of flannel, which has always stood in high repute, yet calico is largely made, as well as silk, machinery of various descriptions, carpets, paper, and manure from the town excreta; for the Corporation has, under the skilful direction of Mr. Alderman Taylor, a local chemist, taken a leading part in solving the difficulty of making it into a useful fertiliser. It is now also moderately remunerative to the Corporation, for in 1882, £3,344 were realised from the sale. The fame of the system has spread so widely, that deputations have visited the works, not only from all parts of Great Britain and Ireland, but from Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Austria, South Africa, Natal, Demerara, and Washington. As the sources of trade in Rochdale are so varied, a depression in one particular branch generally affects only a portion of the inhabitants; but all the principal trades since 1878 have been seriously paralysed, and

"Many rich
Sank down, as in a dream, amongst the poor;
And of the poor did many cease to be."

The return of prosperous trade has been slower than has ever been experienced before. This may be accounted for by the temporary adoption of wash-leather and other material instead of flannel. There are within the borough about 300 manufactories and machine works, and the forest of tall chimneys is indicative of busy industry.

The town is encircled by mountain and moorland scenery,

and there are many dells, ravines, and glens of tempting sylvan beauty, "fit for poet's dream, or painter's pencil, or for preacher's theme." In fact, there are very few towns which have such picturesque surroundings.

As to the rank and importance of Rochdale, John Bright has done much to familiarise its name all over the world. It is a place of great antiquity, and of Saxon origin; but sixty or seventy years ago it was small and unimportant. When Lord John Russell introduced his Reform Bill in 1832, so obscure was the town, that he excluded it from the list of places worthy of being enfranchised. A deputation of the inhabitants waited upon his Lordship to call his attention to its importance, and to the fact that it ought to be included in the list of representation. Lord John Russell actually admitted that he had never before heard the name of the town, but stated that he had often read of Castleton, which was the name of one of the townships merely. The honour of being represented in the House of Commons was conferred, and soon after John Bright began to rise as a popular orator, and the town grew out of obscurity with his fame. He was the first native to rise to a position of such distinguished eminence. Lord Byron, the poet, it is true, was in his early life Lord of the Manor of Rochdale, but he was not a native nor a resident; moreover he visited Rochdale only once, and that was on business with respect to some coal mines he possessed on his estate. As the poet at the time was in pecuniary difficulties, he sold the manor of Rochdale, and thus his slight connection with the town ceased.

The town of Rochdale with its most illustrious native might be compared with the commercial city of Tarsus and its apostolic orator, for there are many points of similarity between the citizens of each: such as their religious parentage, mental vigour, ardent zeal of character, fearless independence, thorough sincerity, tenderness of feeling, indefatigable journeyings, and generous devotion to the welfare of the poor.

There is in the name of Mr. John Bright's residence ("One Ash") a distinct savour of the religious body to which the majority, if not the whole, of his family belong. It is a fact that at the time he chose the site of his house, a solitary ash-tree grew thereon, and, as we may briefly show, this distinctive feature was seized upon to keep alive the memory of a famous relative. Just as "One Ash" is the residence of Mr. John Bright, so was "Monyash," or "Manyash," in Derbyshire, the house of John Gratton, a

conspicuous leader of the sect founded by George Fox. Gratton, who died in January, 1712, was an untiring Quaker preacher. He travelled all the country through, his fervid oratory in the neighbouring counties of Cheshire and Derbyshire having all the effect of modern revival, and bringing the duties of religion home to the hearts of many. Scotland and Ireland were also visited by him, the persecutions of the time bating nothing of his zeal. He was arrested several times, and subjected to the statutory fine of £20 for nonconformity of doctrine; yet he persevered in the cause and continued to preach. In the reign of King Charles II. he was thrown into prison for refusing to desist from public exhortations, and we must go back to the days of the early Christians to find anything so touching as the heroic tranquillity, the unflinching firmness, the unresisting meekness with which he bore his cruel wrongs and sufferings. He lingered in Derby gaol from June, 1680, until the death of Charles in 1685. These five years of imprisonment were dreary and monotonous, varied only by the welcome sunshine that flecked the prison floor with the shade of the bars, while from the street came "careless laugh and idle words, and tread of passing feet."

"I thought of Paul and Silas, within Philippi's cell,
And how from Peter's sleeping limbs the prison shackles fell,
Till I seemed to hear the trailing of an angel's robe of white,
And to feel a blessed presence invisible to sight."

John Gratton's spirit, however, was not broken, for he harangued the populace from behind the gratings of his cell. His fervour and manner favourably impressed them, and his power extended farther and wider than his prison walls. At first the people wondered how that meek old man could suffer with such unrepining calmness; but at last when some of them learnt the faith for which he suffered, they wondered no more. In his own words, "Many of the people were loving and friendly to me, and some young men were convinced, among whom the gaoler's son was one." When King James II. came to the throne in 1685, John Gratton was released with 1,400 others who had been imprisoned for conscience' sake. The influence of such a man was wide-spread; his name, his birthplace, and his memory were amongst the traditions of the zealous members of the Society of Friends. Such were the progenitors of Mr. John Bright, and, upon no far-fetched hypothesis, to the "Monyash" of John Gratton

may be fairly attributed the name, "One Ash," the residence of the Nestor of the Liberal party.

Beorht was the ancient Anglo-Saxon name for Bright, and there were many modifications of it, such as Egbert, Ethelbert and Albert. The line of ancestry of the Bright family can be traced back to a respectable farmer named Abraham Bright and Martha his wife, who resided at a farm about two miles from the pretty village of Lyneham, a pleasant dairy country in Wiltshire, in the year 1684. At the present time the farmhouse bears the name of "Bright's Farm." An examination of the old registers reveals the fact that John, son of Abraham Bright and Martha his wife, was baptised at Lyneham on the 26th of December, 1689. Next was born a daughter in 1692, who was named Mary; William in 1696, Jacob in 1699, Thomas in 1703, and Elizabeth in 1706. On the 16th of April, 1711, Abraham Bright, wool-comber, of West Tockenham, a few miles from Lyneham, was married at Lyneham, to Dinah, daughter of Abraham Bright, serge-weaver, and in January, 1713, a son was born who was christened John; next came William, Martha, Mary, Jacob, and Thomas. In the year 1714, Abraham Bright, a relative of the first-named Abraham Bright, married a very pretty Jewess, named Martha Jacobs, and resided for many years in a cottage in Lyneham, which was surrounded by an orchard an acre and a quarter in area, but the cottage fell into ruins in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and now scarcely a vestige is left, and the last group of apple-trees died about fifty years ago from old age, yet the name survives, for the spot is still called "Bright's Orchard."

The earlier branches of the Bright family belonged to the Established Church, but ultimately they joined the Society of Friends, which was a numerous body in that neighbourhood, and it is conjectured that many of the family were buried in the Friends' graveyard at "Goat-acre"—probably a corruption of the term "God's-acre"—which is situated a mile and a-half from Lyneham, but a few years ago a Primitive Methodist chapel was erected on the site, and no tombstone bearing the name of Bright can now be found. In the churchyard at Lyneham there is no record on the tombstones of the family to convey any information respecting the day of their birth or of their death. Of all the intervening period, their hopes and their fears, their joys and miseries, their verse and prose, very little can be gleaned; and this strengthens the supposition that they were buried at "Goat-

acre." Within living memory not a single member of the Bright family has dwelt at Lynham or the neighbourhood. All, except those who had previously lived and died there, left their native village as the Spirit prompted them, to seek their fortune elsewhere, or, in Milton's phrase, in "fresh fields and pastures new" to find a "local habitation and a name," as Shakespeare hath it, in spots more noisy than their own, if not "for the great wave that echoes round the world," as the poet laureate so musically words it.

The handsome Jewess and her husband removed to Coventry, and had several children, among whom was William Bright, who married twice. By his first wife, Mary Goole, he had several children, one of whom, Jacob Bright, married Martha Lucas, who bore him eight children, the youngest of whom was Jacob Bright. He came to Rochdale in 1802, and was the father of our eminent townsman.

Many of the biographies of famous men conceal the facts connected with the humble parentage of their heroes, as if descent from wealthy or high-born parents contributed to genius, or that genius gained a ray of lustre from these advantages. The roll of immortal names, to which England owes so much, would be seriously diminished, if those who were neither born wealthy, nor ranked in birth above the middle class, were expunged from it. For instance, George Stephenson, the originator of the passenger locomotive, in early life was a ploughboy; Humphry Davy was the son of a carver; Richard Arkwright was a barber for many years; James Watt, the son of a Greenock blockmaker; George Canning, the son of an author; Sir Robert Peel, the son of a Bury cotton manufacturer; W. E. Gladstone, the son of a Liverpool merchant; Richard Cobden, the son of a farmer; William Wilberforce, the son of a Hull merchant; the fathers of Edmund Burke and of Henry Grattan were Dublin solicitors; Shakespeare, the son of a Stratford butcher; Milton, a schoolmaster; Wordsworth's father was a solicitor; Robert Burns was an Ayrshire ploughman; Pope, the son of a merchant; Jonathan Swift was reared amidst circumstances of abject poverty; Samuel Johnson, a bookseller; Ben Jonson, a bricklayer; Bloomfield, a shoemaker; Akenside, the son of a butcher; Robert Southey, the son of a Bristol linendraper; Oliver Goldsmith, a Dublin medical student; Thomas Chatterton, the son of a Bristol chanter; Thomas Hood, an engraver; Thomas Moore, the son of a Dublin grocer; Thomas Babington Macaulay, the son of a merchant; David Hume was a law student; Thomas

Carlyle, the son of a mason; Charles Dickens, a reporter; Douglas Jerrold, a printer; Daniel Defoe, an apprentice to a hosier; Cobbett, a private soldier; Hogarth, an engraver of pewter pots; Joshua Reynolds, the son of a Plympton clergyman; David Garrick, a Lichfield law student; Blackstone, the son of a linendraper; Isaac Newton, the son of a Lincolnshire farmer; Charles Darwin, the son of a Shrewsbury doctor; John Ruskin, the son of a wine merchant; Goldwin Smith, the son of a Berkshire physician; Buchanan, a private soldier; Martin Luther, the son of a miner; John Bunyan, a Bedford tinker; Columbus, a weaver; Homer, a beggar, Virgil, the son of a baker; Demosthenes, the son of a cutler; Haydon, the son of a poor cartwright; William Herschel, son of a musician; Canova, the son of a stone-cutter; Raffaele, the son of a peasant; M. Munkacsy commenced life as a joiner; Henry W. Longfellow, the son of a Portland solicitor; and John Greenleaf Whittier, the son of a Massachusetts farmer.

“Nobility of birth does not always ensure a corresponding nobility of mind,” and the pride of boasting of family antiquity makes duration stand for merit; and what we have not ourselves achieved we can scarcely call our own. The fantastical claims of high birth merely confers learned ignorance and the groping in the dark of Heralds’ College. If it be glorious to trace our family up to Edward the First, it should be still more so to ascend to Edward the Confessor; yet pride seldom mounts higher than the first illustrious name, the first titled or celebrated progenitor, whom it chooses to call the founder of the family. The haughtiest vaunter of high pedigree and the honours of unbroken descent, from the time of William the Conqueror, would probably weep with shame at being enabled to follow his name three hundred years farther back, through a succession of ploughmen, mechanics, or malefactors. As it cannot be denied that all families are, in point of fact, equally ancient, the distinction consists in possessing records to prove a certain succession; and even this, it appears, ceases to be a boast beyond a certain point.

If it were possible to trace back the current of an Englishman’s blood to its early fountains, what a strange compound would the mass present! What a confusion and intermingling of subsidiary streams from the Britons, Romans, Danes, Saxons, and Normans, amalgamating with minor tributaries from undiscoverable sources, mocking any power to analyse, and almost bewildering imagination to conceive!

The Shylock of rag fair, who might live in worse than

Israelitish covetousness and grovelling of soul, and die in the pestilential cellar in which he first drew breath, if by some well-managed usury, he achieved enormous wealth, becomes a Phoenix in the public eye, and the very hem of his garment is regarded with veneration, and his descendants revered as genteel so long as they wear good clothes and feed well. Fantastical is the vanity which, while it cannot deny to the beggar at the gate the privilege of being equally descended from Adam and Eve, rests its own claims to superiority upon being enabled to prove a fiftieth part of the same antiquity, struts, like the bird in the fable, in others' finery, and piques itself upon the actions of its ancestors, instead of its own. "No matter what his race, but what he is," is preferable to being only the shadow of a mighty name.

CHAPTER II.

MR. BRIGHT'S FATHER AND MOTHER.

Boyhood and Youth of Mr. Jacob Bright—Mr. William Holme—The Friends in Rochdale—Miss Sophia Holme—Her Marriage with Mr. Jacob Bright, and Death—Miss Martha Wood—Mr. Bright's Birth—His Mother's Benevolence—Her Personal Appearance—Her Death—Mr. Bright's Sisters—His Father and the Workmen—Church Rates—Anecdotes Illustrative of Mr. Jacob Bright's Character—His Business—Miss Mary Metcalf.

THE late Jacob Bright was born on the 24th of August, 1775, at Coventry, his father and mother, Jacob and Martha Bright, dying when he was young and in poor circumstances. Being of the Quaker persuasion he was placed by the aid of the Society of Friends at Ackworth School, which is pleasantly situated in the village of that name in Yorkshire. He was afterwards apprenticed to a worthy farmer, Mr. Holme, who had three or four looms in his house, at the village of New Mills, in Derbyshire, to learn hand-loom weaving. "About the year 1796," so said his eloquent son, the distinguished member for Birmingham, in a speech delivered in Rochdale, "when my father was free of his apprenticeship, he sallied forth to seek his living, or as the story-books say, to seek his fortune, along with a fellow-apprentice (Mr. William Tew, who for many years acted as manager and bookkeeper for Mr. Jacob Bright, and who afterwards set up in business in Halifax), and I have heard him say that their joint purse did not amount to more than about ten shillings. He found employment at his business as a weaver, and he was able to earn about six shillings per week. At that time the Government of England was engaged in a tremendous war with the French Republic. The Government of England was shedding the blood of its people as though it were but water, and squandering its treasure as though it had not been accumulated by the painful labour and the sweat of the population of this kingdom, and trade was very bad, and wages were very low, and six shillings a week was that which a hand-loom weaver at that time could earn. In the year 1802 my father came to this town (Rochdale), his old master's sons came there, and in conjunction with two or three gentlemen in this neighbourhood (Messrs. John Taylor, James Butterworth,

and William Midgley) they built a mill, which you all know quite well as the Hanging Road Factory. It was, I believe, the second factory in this town and neighbourhood which was set to work in cotton-spinning. He remained there for seven years, and in 1809 he took an old mill on Cronkeyshaw, named Greenbank. Some friends of his in Manchester, who were in business there as commission agents, seeing his aptitude for business, and believing in his honourable character, found the capital which was necessary to begin business in that mill, and about the end of the year 1809 the old steam engine, which was put down there by Boulton and Watt, of Birmingham, nobody knows hardly how long since, first turned round to spin cotton in that old mill. From 1809 to 1867 is at least 57 years, and I venture to say that, with one single exception, and that not of long duration, there has been during that 57 years an uninterrupted harmony and confidence between my family connected with the business and those who have assisted us and been employed in it." It was fortunate then in many respects that the Derbyshire weaver

"Here fixed his home,
Or rather say, sat down by very chance
Among these rugged hills."

It would be as well here to relate that Mr. Jacob Bright acted in the capacity of book-keeper for Messrs. John Holme and William Holme, and during the latter years he was in their service, he was promoted to the position of salesman, and was considered both shrewd and dexterous in this line of business.

In the year 1808 Mr. William Holme resided in a large house off Toad Lane, which in those days was considered a fine residence, and is situated in what is now called St. Mary's Place. It was surrounded by a garden, which extended to what now bears the modern name of Brickerroft, on the one hand, and St. Mary's Gate on the other, and ran parallel with Toad Lane. Up to this date the Friends had no Meeting House in Rochdale, and on Thursday morning it was customary to hold divine service in the parlour of this mansion. On Sundays they repaired on foot to a Meeting House at Turf Lane, near Oldham, a distance of about six miles, thus evincing their devotion and attachment to their particular faith. These followers of George Fox, their founder, like him, were worshippers of light and silence, a light "that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," a silence

which they regarded as the voice of God in the soul. These silent services give the members a good opportunity for self-examination. Their tried and sore-fretted spirits, harassed by the noise and turmoil of the week, experience a refreshment under the influence of the holy calm and religious stillness which pervades their house of prayer and fellow-worshippers on that sacred day. The members of this sect have ever been the most amiable in their social manners, peaceable, gentle, mild, compassionate, beneficent and most praiseworthy in their public intercourse, and the poor in their ranks have always received timely aid.

“Oh, it is a faith
Taught by no priest; but by their beating hearts;
Faith to each other, the fidelity
Of fellow-wanderers in a desert place
Who share the same dire thirst, and therefore share
The scanty water . . .
Nay, in the silent bodily presence feel
The mystic stirrings of a common life,
Which make the many one.”

In the autumn of 1808 a Meeting House was erected in George Street, Rochdale, destitute of architectural pretension, but commodious in the interior. Mr. Jacob Bright was a member of the building committee, but his selection for the post of usefulness amused him, for he remarked that he could not understand why they should have selected him, unless it was because he knew less about building than any other man.

“Love, ever busy with his shuttle,” wove a tender attachment between the industrious salesman and his employer’s sister, Miss Sophia Holme, and they were married, and set up house-keeping at No. 71, Toad Lane, Rochdale, a rather spacious house, on the left-hand side, approached by a flight of eight steps in front, protected by iron railings. They were not destined to live long together, for death dissolved the union of these true hearts, and at the early age of twenty-eight (on the 10th of May, 1806), Mrs. Bright was buried in the Friends’ graveyard, Turf Lane End, near Oldham. This unhappy occurrence caused Mr. Bright to give himself up to business more unreservedly than ever, and he became one of the most familiar figures in the Manchester market. He suffered much from the loss he had sustained, but there was one above all others whose genuine sympathy he appreciated. “Pity,” says the proverb, “is the parent of future love,” and our sequel will confirm this aphorism.

In the course of time Mr. Jacob Bright was found to return home from Manchester market in his gig through Bolton, which

was not the shortest way to Rochdale, and departure from the old beaten track became more frequent. The fact was, the sympathy that had been felt by a handsome Quakeress had ripened into the first flutterings of the silken wings of a more tender passion; and the finale was that two were made one, "in will and affection;" for Miss Martha Wood, the daughter of a respectable tradesman of Bolton-le-Moors, and Mr. Jacob Bright were married on the 21st of July, 1809. At the time of their nuptials she was about twenty, her husband being a good deal older. She was, moreover, a woman of fine features and figure, refined in her tastes, and fond of books. They commenced housekeeping at No. 28, High Street, near the corner of Redcross Street. The following year, however, they removed to Greenbank, then a neat country residence, situated off Whitworth Road, near Cronkeyshaw Common. Here, on the 19th of November, 1810, a little stranger made his appearance, and he was named William; but four years after

"There fell upon the house a sudden gloom,
A shadow on those features fair and thin,
And softly, from that hush'd and darkened room,
Two angels issued, where but one went in."

And this boy was the first of the Bright family that found a resting-place in the quiet and secluded graveyard of the Friends' Meeting House in Rochdale. But before this event, a second little stranger, fairer still, who was destined to make himself known throughout the world, and to improve the condition of the working-class by his wisdom and power of speech, was born at Greenbank, on the 16th of November, 1811, and he received, not numerous and high-sounding names, but the simple and single name of "John." Next were born Sophia, on the 27th of May, 1813; Thomas, on the 22nd of September, 1814; Priscilla, on the 8th of September, 1815; Benjamin, on the 23rd of February, 1817; Margaret, on the 14th of July, 1818, Esther, on the 15th of May, 1820; Jacob, on the 26th of May, 1821; Gratton, on the 19th of September, 1823; and Samuel, on the 16th of October, 1826. Mrs. Bright was a woman of fine character, and exercised great influence over her large family.

When Mr. Jacob Bright commenced business at Greenbank mill, trade was in a languid state, wages low, and the cottager had barely sufficient to eat, and what he had was poor in quality. At this time the mill system was in its rude, primitive condition. The employed were the slaves of the employers, and their health and social comforts were utterly

ignored in the race for wealth. The people were gloomy and dissatisfied, and eagerly hailed any new project which was likely to improve their condition. Fortunately, Mr. Bright's business rapidly enlarged, and there was a perceptible improvement in the condition of the poor in the surrounding locality. He manufactured on a large scale hand-loom calicoes, and these were made by the poor, who were scattered for miles, even to the base of Blackstone Edge. The clatter of the busy shuttle, which merrily flashed through the loom, gladdened the poor man's home; the families were better clothed and fed, and consequently more contented. Cheerfulness often broke forth in simple melodies, which, it is said, always sweeten labour: for the Scotch shepherd makes his native glens and grey moors resound with his song; the Swiss, Tyrolese, and Carpathians lighten their labour by music; the Spanish muleteer cares little for politics if he can indulge in his carol. The vintager of Sicily has his vesper hymn, even at the foot of the burning Etna; the boatman of Naples has his fishing song, to which his rocking boat beats time, and the Venetian, in his gondola, still delights in his midnight serenade. Such is the cheering influence of innocent song on the workers of all climes, not to mention the spiritual and divine uses to which music is applied. But to return to the subject, from which this is a digression. It was a pleasant sight on Fridays to see weavers wending their way by high roads and bye-paths to Greenbank mill, laden with a week's production of the loom. They were purposely paid on the Friday, so that they might purchase their humble necessities in good time on the Saturday.

As Mrs. Bright was strolling one day on Cronkeyshaw Common, with the "flower" of her flock toddling by her side, they met a poor widow with a ragged little boy, about the same age as John, in petticoats. The widow, who had a large family, gave an account of her woes and privations to Mrs. Bright, who, pitying her condition, returned to her own home, taking the widow with her. The little gentleman was denuded of his first new suit, which was transferred to the ragged boy, who was sent home comfortably and decently attired, his mother also rejoicing in the happy prospect of employment and support for the rest of the family. As the widow's children grew up their prosperity increased. One of them became manager of Messrs. Bright's firm, and discharged the duties of his office with credit for many years; he has since, too, served his native town as Town Councillor and Guardian. His brothers have also led useful and honourable lives. The "ragged boy," who is now in the

autumnal years of life, still lives on Cronkeyshaw Common, and feels proud of the fact that he wore the Right Hon. John Bright's first new suit of clothes.

Mrs. Bright and her daughters were in the habit of visiting the sick and the poor in the neighbourhood frequently, and from their friendly hands refreshments were distributed. To give the reader an idea of their charity, a single instance will be sufficient. An old stone-breaker, at that time employed in Falinge Road, was bereaved of one of his children, and wasso poor that he could not pay for a coffin. Mrs. Bright and her daughters accidentally heard of the case, and purchasing for the old man, his wife and three daughters, new clothing for the funeral, also presented them with a sovereign to defray other expenses.

Every morning the poor, sometimes in great numbers, visited Greenbank, and received tickets upon shopkeepers for grocery, shoes, and clothing.

Twice a week, in one of their cottages near Greenbank, occupied by a person named Blomley, Mrs. Bright gave instruction to young women in the evening, the proceedings being opened by Mrs. Bright reading, with beautiful expression and solemnity, a portion of Scripture. Her favourite chapter was St. John xiv.: "Let not your heart be troubled," &c. Reading, sewing, and other branches of needlework were also taught.

Mrs. Bright, besides superintending the domestic work, assisted her husband in his book-keeping. When seated or strolling in the garden she was often engaged knitting stockings for her children and those of her poor neighbours, and she always made "bishops," or aprons, for those girls in the factory who could not afford them. Her life was one of usefulness, for she not only brought up her own family in the path of rectitude, but, although charged with the cares of a large family, she found time to instruct the children of her poor neighbours, and to relieve their necessities in cases of sickness and distress. Happy they with such a mother!

This lady was particularly neat, and remarkably plain in her dress—in accordance with the practice of the Friends—carrying out the injunction of St. Paul the Apostle, "that women adorn themselves in modest apparel." She was a person of medium stature, well-built figure, comely, pleasant features, neatly attired during the morning in a print dress, worn rather short and displaying about one inch of the underskirt all round. In the afternoon she wore a

stuff dress and the Quaker's plain white cap—all her attire exhibiting a charming simplicity. On Sunday, when it was very wet under foot, she was to be seen making her way to the Meeting House in the ring pattens of the period. She was considered a fair equestrian, and with her husband, very frequently rode on horseback from Greenbank to Rake-wood Mill, near Hollingworth Lake, in which he manufactured goods.

Mrs. Bright was not long spared to devote her attention to the charitable work in which she was engaged and to the training of her children, for on the 18th of June, 1830, at the age of 41, her spirit winged its way to its Almighty source, when her eldest son (John) was only 18 years of age; but not before she had instilled into the minds of her sons and daughters influences that in after-years proved that her labours had not been fruitless.

“Sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.”

She was held in the greatest reverence by her children. “The instructions received at a mother's knee, and the paternal lessons, together with the pious and sweet souvenirs of the fire-side, are never effaced entirely from the soul.” She sleeps in peace in the calm earth of the Friends' graveyard in Rochdale.

The Misses Bright established a sewing-class in an office belonging to the mill, where they also taught the girls reading and writing. A school was afterwards built in connection with the mill, and they spent considerable time in promoting the education of the poor children. These ladies continued to visit the haunts where hungry creatures pined, and freely administered relief and consolation to the distressed. They cultivated their own intellectual faculties, and acquired considerable skill in domestic economy and management. One after another at last left their happy home. Their lives had been pleasant and useful, and they confidently trusted themselves to the love and affection of those who had chosen them as companions for life, and who would sympathise with them alike in adversity and prosperity. Such is the nature of the purest type of womankind.

Mr. Duncan Maclaren, M.P. for Edinburgh, married Miss Priscilla Bright. Mr. Vaughan, a barrister, who is now a stipendiary magistrate at Bow Street, London, married Miss Esther Bright, in 1849. Mr. Thomas Ashworth, of Poynton, married the eldest daughter, Miss Sophia Bright, and Mr. S. Lucas married Miss Margaret Bright. Mrs. Vaughan died in

1850, and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery, London. Mrs. Ashworth, who was remarkably handsome, "like the desert's lily, bloomed to fade," for she died on the 4th of May, 1844, at the age of thirty, and was buried in the Friends' graveyard in Rochdale. Mr. Benjamin Bright died at Graefenberg, at the early age of twenty-eight, on the 16th of March, 1845, and was interred on the 10th of April, in the Friends' burial-ground at Rochdale. Mr. Gratton Bright died at Bologna, on the 27th of October, 1853, at the age of thirty, and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Bologna.

"It matters not that far away
From Albion's peaceful shores thy bones decay,"

for although his earthly career was but short, he left a pleasant memory among his own people. Mr. Samuel Bright died at Geneva on the 27th March, 1873, and his remains were brought home to his native town and interred in the Cemetery, where his grave is marked with a stone, with his bust beautifully carved in marble. This sanctuary of the dead is a miniature of hill and dale, redolent with flowers and planted with luxuriant shrubs and trees, from the midst of which monumental stone columns and obelisks shoot up in profusion. Mrs. Lucas is now a widow, and devotes much of her time to the advocacy of the temperance cause.

Mr. Jacob Bright, when conversing with his workpeople, did not seek to conceal his humble position in early life, nor how he had had to struggle to break through the bond of adversity, and to work his way up to competence; on the contrary, he encouraged them to copy his industrious career, and sought to inculcate an elevating influence upon their minds. He stood high in the opinion of his workpeople as a kind and considerate employer. Here, for instance, is the statement made by one workwoman, Mrs. Alice Brierley, of Binn's Nook:—"My husband and myself worked for Mr. Jacob Bright twenty-two years in his mill. In fact, we never worked for any person else, and we have saved as much as £2 a week, and now we have got nineteen cottages of our own to support us in our old age. He always treated us and all his workpeople with the greatest kindness, and studied our comforts."

Sixty years ago it was customary in the majority of mills to have straps hung up in the various rooms for the convenience of overlookers to beat the children who did not attend to their work, or misconducted themselves; but Mr. Jacob Bright would not allow such an instrument of punishment to be introduced

into his mill, or the children to be beaten. Mr. Bright abhorred whistling while at work, and often used to say to an offender "Thou had better go on to the Common and finish thy whistling." If a workman entered the marriage state he would always increase the wages two or three shillings a week, and enjoined that

"If you would have the nuptial union last,
Let virtue be the bond that ties it fast."

He kept an old man, named Joshua Haigh, in the warehouse, to instruct the children in reading, writing, and arithmetic during working hours, and the instruction thus imparted proved of great service in after-years to many, and laid the foundation of their success in life.

The workpeople thoroughly understood the weak points of Mr. Bright's nature, for when they wanted a special holiday they would send a deputation of the children employed in the mill, and the children were never known to fail.

Every New Year's Day he gave the men, women, and children in his employ a shilling, and he nearly always paid the money himself. His face beamed with pleasure when he saw the recipients' manifestations of gratitude. In fact he took almost as much interest in his workpeople as in his own family.

He would never give an old pair of boots to a person in distress, but present him with an order for a new pair. A reformed drunkard, a woollen weaver, who resided near the National School, Redcross Street, once got up a subscription for the purpose of buying himself a wig—for the alcohol he had consumed, he said, had destroyed the roots of his natural hair and made him bald—and he waited upon Mr. Bright for a contribution. Mr. Bright, after glancing over the names of the subscribers, and finding that the whole of them were poor people, declined to contribute unless the whole of the money was returned to the donors; and this being done, he purchased an excellent wig for the reclaimed bacchanalian.

In acts of charity and free contributions to religious institutions he stood amongst the foremost—

"For his bounty,
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping."

Pope had a tolerably vivid insight into human nature when he wrote—

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be blest."

And so it is in every-day life, for we are always expecting a change for the better. A steam-tenter, the father of six children, residing at Syke, in the neighbourhood of Mr. Bright's residence, many years ago employed at a foundry in the heart of the town of Rochdale, receiving wages inadequate for the support of his family, had to depend partially upon charity. His wife waited upon Mr. Jacob Bright for the loan of two shillings, promising to return the money the following week. The date came round, but instead of being able to repay the money, she found it absolutely necessary to ask for another loan of two shillings; and this was repeated until the loans accumulated to £1. The eldest boy, about eight years old, who had been sent for the money and conveyed the promises of repayment, was aroused one morning with the usual cry:—"John, thou must go again to Jacob." "Mother," said the boy, "hast thou the £1 ready?" "No, John," replied the mother. "Then am I to get more money?" said the boy. "Yes, John; we cannot do without it, and I am not able to pay yet," added the mother. The boy burst into tears, saying sorrowfully that he was ashamed to go again after making so many promises to pay, and obeyed his mother very reluctantly. Before he arrived at the counting-house, he met Mr. Jacob Bright, who inquired why he was crying. The boy reminded him that it was the day for the repayment of the £1, and that his mother, still unable to fulfil her promise, wanted another two shillings. Mr. Jacob Bright, patting the boy on the back, bade him cease crying, saying he would rub out the old score and begin again. The borrowing and promising went on, but the day never arrived during the life of Mr. Jacob Bright for the repayment.

On one occasion Mr. Richard Elliott, of Elliott Street, with a friend, called upon him for a subscription in aid of the Methodist New Connexion School. They were invited into his parlour; and on their acquainting him with the object of their visit, he inquired what sum he was in the habit of giving. They stated the amount, upon which he remarked that it was very little, and at once doubled the subscription, and thanked them heartily for taking the trouble to call upon him.

But although instances of his benevolence are numerous, still on the matter of Church Rates he manifested at all times the most thorough repugnance, for he disagreed with the principle, and regarded them as unjust. He was staunch in his opposition to these exactions, and never flinched from the determination which he had formed respecting them. From this it must be presumed that he would never pay a Church Rate willingly,

and distress warrants had always to be issued to enforce payment.

A list of the distress warrants issued against Mr. Jacob Bright, with particulars respecting them, gleaned from the Friends' record, entitled "Sufferings," gives a glimpse of the history of former times, and we will begin with the year 1811. At that time a demand was made upon Mr. Bright for 15s. 8d., for a warden's rate. As he refused to pay this sum, a warrant was issued to levy the amount. In addition the warrant itself cost 8s. Samuel Lomax, warden, was the claimant on behalf of the parish church; and the justices signing the warrant were the Rev. Thomas Drake (vicar) and Mr. William Horton. Under the warrant, cotton twist to the value of £1 9s. 2d. was seized. This occurrence passed over, and three years elapsed before the next seizure, which took place in 1814, for a warden's rate of 2s. 5½d. The charges amounted to 10s., James Clegg, warden, was the claimant, and the magistrate Mr. Wm. Horton. As staunch Mr. Bright would not pay the amount, cotton twist to the value of £1 was seized. By way of explanation we must remark this claim was in respect only of premises in Spotland. In the same year another warrant was executed for £3 18s. 6d. for premises in Wardleworth. The costs did not amount to more than 10s. The claimant was George Law, warden, and Mr. Wm. Horton again signed the warrant. Cotton twist to the value of £7 13s. was carried off in liquidation of claim and costs. In 1815 Mr. Bright was again pounced upon with another warrant for £3 7s. 10d., and 10s. costs. Samuel Jackson, warden, was the claimant; and Mr. Wm. Horton again appears as the magistrate who signed the warrant. In execution of this process, cotton was seized to the value of £5 17s. 2d. The next warrant was issued in 1819, for £6 13s. 7½d., and £1 10s. costs, for three years' Church Rate. The claimant was John Clegg, warden; and Mr. John Entwisle appears, for the first time, as the magistrate signing the warrant. Cotton weft to the value of £14 15s. 2d. was carried off. Not much time was allowed to elapse before the next seizure, which took place the following year, in 1820. This time it had reference to the building of a Chapel-of-Ease (St. James's Church). The amount demanded was £1 4s. and 11s. 6d. costs. Samuel Jackson was the collector and claimant, under an Act of Parliament specially obtained; and Mr. John Beswick signed the warrant. It is matter of remark that under the warrants levied against Mr. Bright, cotton weft seems to have been the choice article to be seized, and so we find that here again this valuable commodity,

to the amount of £2 12s. 6d., was taken. The Chapel-of-Ease was evidently of an uneasy description, and seemed like the horse-leech's daughter, of which mention is made in Scripture; for it again made a further seizure by way of preying—not praying, as one might have expected—in the following year, for a sum of £11 9s. 3d. and 10s. costs. Messrs. John Entwisle and John Beswick were the magistrates. Cotton weft to the value of £16 16s. 10½d. was in this instance removed for the support of this hungry infant of an equally hungry mother. Again, in the same year and for the same purpose, a further claim of £4 7s. 7½d. and 10s. costs was demanded on warrant. Mr. John Beswick was the acting magistrate. In this instance, by way of a change, *calico* worth £5 19s. 9d., and weighing 125lbs., was seized. In the same year £1 3s. was deducted from the rents of tenants for the Church Rates they had been forced to pay. Still, again, in the same year, the mother church, seeing that her interesting progeny was thriving so successfully, wanted a little help on her own account, and asked for the insignificant sums, 6s. 6½d. and 10s. costs. Robert Hardman was the warden, and Mr. John Beswick signed the warrant. Cotton weft to the value of £1 15s. was carried off. This was the last feat of the Church in the year 1821, but the future lay before it for the purpose of further exactions. Accordingly, to begin with, the first claim in 1822 was for £2 18s. 4d., demanded by Edmund Rhodes, warden; Messrs. John Entwisle and John Beswick were the magistrates who signed that interesting document, the warrant, and 104 lbs. of cotton, valued at £4 6s. 8d., were seized. In the same year another warrant was issued for a Church Rate of £2 18s. 4d. The claimant was James Whitworth, warden. For the first time the warrant was signed by Mr. B. W. Burdett, and 112 lbs. of cotton, valued at £4 4s., were taken on the occasion. The Chapel-of-Ease again called for its share the following year, 1823, with a distress warrant for £3 15s. and the costs amounting to £1 6s. 8d., and Messrs. John Entwisle and John Beswick were the magistrates. Fourteen pieces of calico were seized, valued at £5 16s. 3d. A respite of three years followed, for the next warrant was dated 1826, for £1 3s. 4d. and 10s. costs. John Whittles was the warden, and the magistrate Mr. John Beswick. 100 lbs. of cotton of the value of £3 3s., were taken, but there was an after-charge of 8s. Milnrow Church being, as we suppose, of a very benign temper, had all this time been looking on with a complacent smile: when, suddenly, a change came o'er the spirit of her dream, and then arose the (of course) perfectly innocent feeling,

that if her kindred and neighbours were getting on so well, and in point of fact living in clover, there was no earthly reason why she also should not join in for a share; so in the same year a warrant was issued on her behalf for £1 18s. 10d. rate, and 10s. costs. Robert Sutcliffe, warden, was the claimant, and Mr. John Beswick, in the performance of his magisterial functions, affixed his signature to the warrant. 100lbs. of cotton, of the value of £3 3s., were removed, and an after-charge of 8s. was found necessary. In the same year the Chapel-of-Ease required £2 11s. 7½d., and the costs amounted to £1. Mr. John Beswick signed the distress warrant. Mr. Bright on this occasion was deprived of *cotton shirting*, of the value of £4 2s. 9d. He was closely pursued in the year following (1827), with a warrant for £3 7s. 3d. and 10s., claimed by George Holt, warden, with Mr. John Beswick as magistrate. Six pieces of cotton, containing 312 yards shirting, valued at 5d. per yard, amounting in all to £7 3s., found (it is said) a somewhat circuitous way into the coffers of St. Chad's Church, but whether that ancient edifice received all the benefits is more than we should venture to assert. A suspension of activities on the part of the church militant for months was here allowed, for the next warrant was dated 1829. Thomas Sykes comes on the scene for the first time as warden, and again Mr. John Beswick acts as magistrate. £2 18s. 4d. worth of cotton was distrained, and a further charge of 8s. was found necessary to liquidate the account. Milnrow about the same time (for she had gained some experience) put in a claim for £1 3s. 5d., which was enforced by means of a distress warrant with 12s. 6d. costs. John Shepherd, warden, was the claimant on behalf of the parish, and Mr. John Beswick, who was without exception the most indefatigable of the king's justices, was again the gentleman whose signature was affixed to the warrant. £2 18s. 6d. worth of cotton was carried off, and the additional charges continued amounting to 8s. St. Chad's here allowed a short respite until the year 1832, and then put in a claim for £1 11s. 3d. and 10s. costs. Robert Whittles was the claimant, and two magistrates' names appeared on the warrant, viz., those of Messrs. John Entwisle and Clement Royds. £3 14s. worth of cotton was removed, and the law costs amounted to 8s. The next year, 1833, Benjamin Butterworth, warden, claimed £5 18s. 1½d. and £1 costs. Mr. Clement Royds signed the warrant, and 358 yards of calico, worth 5d. per yard, valued at £7 9s. 2d., were removed. We could continue the list of warrants, which ranged over years, but refrain from

doing so, fancying that what has been given is sufficient to enlighten our readers as to the persecutions of those times, and the noble struggle for freedom of conscience.

“What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?
Thrice is he arm'd that hath his quarrel just;
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.”

Generally, in the history of human life, the good man does not always rank according to his merit; but in the details of fiction we find worth, still more purified by suffering, elevated to the post of honour, and see splendid oppression, although successful for its season, eventually branded with public detestation. As is well known, Church Rates had been for many years an obnoxious impost to a very numerous section of the community, who regarded them as having sprung from an anti-Christian root; and the murmurings of the people became louder and more distinct, until public indignation rose to such a height as to command the requisite attention of the powers that be, and Church Rates, with all the vexations which they brought about, became things of the past.

To return to pleasanter topics, we find Mr. Bright exercising that benevolence for which his family is noted. A jealous neighbour of a poor farmer who kept a lean cow and a donkey, hurriedly waited upon Mr. Bright to inform him that Daniel Sladen's donkey, of Hazle Greave Farm, near Syke, had got through the fence into his clover field, and pressed him to send the animal to the pinfold, remarking that the owner would be thus punished by getting into the clutches of the law. To the informant's disgust, Mr. Bright received the alarming information quite coolly, and not only expressed admiration at the good sense of poor “Jenny,” in preferring rich and luscious clover to the less palatable fare which the common afforded, but actually asked the evil-disposed complainant to wait on the farmer and tell him to take his cow there to feed in company with its friend the donkey; and thus the jealous neighbour, much against his will, was made the bearer of good tidings to the man whom he had made up his mind to harass and persecute. If the sacred sward of a parson's paddock had been thus trespassed upon, great would have been the indignation, and the exclamation might have been:—

“What! crop the close? the parson's too?
For this can less than death be due?
When thorns and thistles grow so plenty
Could nothing but the glebe content ye?
From such a sin but death can purge ye—
Death without benefit of clergy.”

Some few of Mr. Bright's workwomen, whose husbands frequently spent their leisure hours in public-houses of an evening, occasionally waited upon Mr. Bright for his advice to bring about a better state of things. After quietly listening, he gave to most of them (when he thought it necessary) broad hints as to the best plan of reforming their husbands. His recommendations were given in a forcible yet homely style, by relating to his auditors a circumstance that had come under his own observation. He knew a friend, he would say, who was commonly addicted to visiting a neighbouring public-house of an evening, and the man's wife sought counsel from a friend as to how he could be cured. The recommendation was simple, and was merely to keep her house tidy,

"Th' har'stone as white as new snow,"—

have the food nicely cooked and neatly placed on the table, and on Saturday evenings a newspaper lying temptingly about, and to be good-tempered and chatty. The first Saturday evening the experiment was tried the husband could not make out why everything was in order; why his wife smiled and was so agreeable. After washing himself and donning his best suit he sat down to tea. He noticed a newspaper lying on the table, and began to read, observing to her that he had been thinking of running across the road for a gill and a look at the paper; however, as he had already got a newspaper and felt comfortable it was not worth while going out.

"Aw've no gradely comfort, my lass,
Except wi' yon childer and thee."

Thus the wanderer was cured of seeking comfort elsewhere than at his own fireside, became rich and an ornament to society. Of course, the moral intended was that they should do likewise. Some adopted the plan and were profited thereby; others thought it was not worth the while, and so lived the old life of misery, which a little effort would most probably have completely changed.

Two men, who have now reached the stage of middle-age, relate that when they were boys, in passing through "Flag-field," which was below Greenbank, they were walking on the grass, although there was a broad footpath, and Mr. Jacob Bright meeting them good-humouredly remarked, "Well, my lads, do you think that you will often pass through this field? for if you do I'll get the footpath made broader for your special convenience." The hint was sufficient, and so deep was its

impression, that they never wantonly trespassed again, nor ever forgot the irony which the admonishment contained. Gentleness thus accomplished what harshness would have been ineffective in doing.

When Mr. Jacob Bright was a journeyman weaver he had a piecer who went by the name of "Old Duke," a mischievous boy and a regular gormandiser. The workpeople who brought their dinners to the mill were often relieved of their chief meal, especially if it were composed of anything that would tempt an appetite. The disappearance of the dinners for some time was unaccountable, but suspicion at last fell upon the "Duke," and Mr. Bright determined to fathom the mystery. He had all the piecers ranged in a row, and informed them of his intended experiment of making them all cast "their accounts" by the aid of a chemical mixture. The "Duke" was so alarmed at the threatened operation and the re-appearance of the stolen dinner, that he confessed his guilt, and he was cured of swallowing other people's dinners.

Pigs have an inveterate habit of rooting up the earth, which seems as natural to them as grunting, but they are more partial to garden soil than to that of a common, and the porkers of Mrs. Ann Jones, of Whitworth Road, always preferred Mr. Bright's garden to Cronkeyshaw Common. Samuel Sheriff, the coachman, after continual annoyance, got angry one day, and in chasing the pigs out of the garden struck one of them a terrific blow on the back with a stick, whereby it lost the use of its hind quarters. Mrs. Jones's suspicion fell upon the irate Samuel, and she made a complaint to Mr. Bright. Now the coachman knew that only another pair of eyes than his own had witnessed the incident, and knowing well the impartiality of Mr. Bright, he attempted to persuade the owner of those eyes to say that at the time he had been looking another way. James Tweedale, the witness, was not the man to be so persuaded. Mr. Bright sat in judgment, with Ann on the right and Samuel on the left, the disabled pig being placed in the middle. James Tweedale's station was between the complainant and defendant. The evidence was heard, the coachman "found wanting," and judgment was thus delivered:—Ann Jones had done wrong in allowing her pigs to trespass after continual warning, but the coachman had no right to strike the pig, and must take the consequence. The porker was ordered to be killed and divided into two parts, the defendant to take the hind part and pay the complainant for it at the rate at which pork was then selling. Mrs. Jones was gratified, Samuel had something to eat for his

money, and both were mutually contented with Mr. Bright's Solomon-like decision.

Edgar Allan Poe, in his famous poem "The Bells," beautifully describes the sound of "the mellow wedding bells," "the loud alarum bells," and "the tolling of the bells" in that "muffled monotone," but has entirely ignored the more tender, all-softening, overpowering tinkling of the dinner-bell, which touches so sensitive a chord in the systems of the young. A widow's large family of hungry boys, who worked at Greenbank Mill, used to watch with the greatest anxiety the first movement of the rope of the dinner-bell of the factory, and before the "clapper" sounded, they were off "helter-skelter" for home, although porridge was provided for dinner nearly every day, and even that in scanty proportion. Mr. Jacob Bright, in crossing the moor one day, met one of the boys named Benjamin running as hard as he could, crying. Mr. Bright inquired what was the matter. "Ben," nearly out of breath, asked if "Sam," his brother, had passed. Mr. Bright replied that he had seen him running in the direction of home two minutes before. "Ben" resumed his crying and began to walk back, saying that he might as well return to the mill, for he was certain that before he could get home all the porridge would have disappeared. Mr. Bright took Ben to his own kitchen, ordered the cook to give him a good dinner, and told him that he was to repeat his visits daily until further orders. "Ben" was the most delicate of his brothers, but the substantial fare told favourably on his thin frame; at last he felt ashamed of what he regarded as taking advantage of a good nature, and as the "further orders" never came to discontinue his visits, he turned rebellious and resumed his fare of porridge, always trying his best to keep abreast with "Sam." In the race of life "Sam" is ahead, enjoying the ease of a competency, while "Ben" is still repressed by the cold hand of poverty, and toiling for the "bread which perisheth."

Mr. John Entwisle, Captain Ball, and Mr. James Butterworth waited upon Mr. Jacob Bright, previous to the election of 1832, in their canvass to solicit his vote. "Well," said Mr. Jacob Bright, upon learning the object of their visit, "thou art a very good neighbour, John Entwisle, and they tell me thou art a good magistrate and kind to the poor, and we cannot spare thee out of Rochdale, so I cannot conscientiously give thee my vote." This was one way out of the difficulty, by pointing out

"How few

Know their own good; or, knowing it, pursue."

Mr. Entwisle was pleased with what he regarded as a compliment

paid to him, his friends were tickled with the adroit fencing of the "reformer," and Jacob chuckled at escaping without giving offence, and they indulged in a firm grasp and shaking of hands and parted good friends.

Hundreds of grey-headed men and women remember that when they were children they took part on Whit-Friday in the Sunday School processions which paraded the streets of the town, and repaired to Mr. Jacob Bright's meadow, immediately below his residence at Greenbank. There was a large hollow in this field, forming a rural amphitheatre, and a waggon was placed at the bottom to serve as a platform for the ministers and friends who assembled on the occasion. The children all sat round from top to bottom, and it was an imposing sight to see them with "countenances made beautiful by the soul shining through them," arrayed in clean garments, and raising their tuneful voices in hymns of praise. "Of all the sights which can soften and humanise the heart of man," Southey truly said, "there is none that ought so surely to reach it as that of innocent children, enjoying the happiness which is their proper and natural portion." The children assembled on these occasions enjoyed themselves in innocent games of all sorts after they had listened to the addresses and sung hymns. Happy were those early days, and no doubt many have since longed to travel back and be children again if it were possible.

"Ah! happy years! once more who would not be a boy?"

For many years Mr. Bright strolled amidst the happy gatherings, patting children on the shoulders and saying kind and encouraging words. "Kindness gives birth to kindness," and the good man's smile and pleasant manners made deep and lasting impressions, which have never been forgotten by those who received them. In those days all branches of Dissenters marched their children in procession together, and the first and many successive gatherings were held, by the kind permission of Mr. Bright, in this meadow.

It was one of Mr. Bright's regulations that the girls employed in his mill should learn the various processes of manufacture for their own benefit; for instance, they would be first employed on throstles, next winding or reeling, and then warping. Besides this he allowed strangers to learn warping in his mill, although they intended to work elsewhere, remarking to his manager that it was far better to gain a good name and the respect of his fellow-townsmen than much riches. All his sons had also to learn the various branches of the business.

Mr. Bright, by the force of his exertions, established and conducted a large business in the cotton trade. In the year 1823, the spindles in his mill numbered 7,000, but now in the existing mills they have increased to 40,000, to say nothing of the carpet trade, which was originated by his energetic sons. Finding that his business had outgrown his small mill at Greenbank, he built a large mill on the other side of the common, and on the ground floor of this mill, his son, John Bright, learnt weaving. In 1838 he erected another in close proximity, fifty-seven yards long, twenty yards broad, and five storeys high, but on Tuesday, April 10th, 1838, it was destroyed by fire, with the whole of the machinery, which was new and of the most valuable description. The fire broke out about eight o'clock in the morning, from friction of one of the scutching machines. The loss amounted to about £20,000, but the building and machinery were insured, though not to the full amount. While it was rebuilding the old mills were kept working night and day for about eighteen months, so that the workpeople might be kept employed. The new mill this time was made fireproof. About the year 1842, another mill, larger than those already erected, was built, and another in 1845, and two new engines, 60-horse power each, were made to work the machinery. This was the success founded upon such small beginnings, but patience and industry in the long run will do wonders. Mr. Bright was most assiduous in business and visited the Manchester Market with great regularity. After returning he would go into his mill, instruct his overlookers how to work out the orders he had received, and would not leave until he saw the work done efficiently. He thoroughly understood the whole machinery, and could trace out a flaw immediately. His twist was noted in the Manchester market, and most of his customers transacted business with him for many years. He retired in 1839, and his sons carried on the business under the name of "John Bright & Brothers," and the mills are known as Fieldhouse Mills.

For a few years previous to and during 1832, great distress prevailed throughout the greater part of England, and most of the manufacturers were compelled to run short time on account of the general depression in trade. Mr. Jacob Bright, however, kept his mill working full time, although his warehouses were heavily stocked. Some time after, as on other occasions, he was able to dispose of his stock without sustaining serious loss. Previous to and during the year 1846, when trade was in a depressed state, most of the mills in Rochdale and surrounding towns were closed. Mr. Jacob Bright was at length compelled to

suspend production for about eight weeks, but during that time he allowed the workpeople to receive half their usual weekly earnings, to be repaid at their own leisure, and to the credit of the operatives it ought to be stated that almost the full amount was restored.

Mr. Jacob Bright might be described as a man of broad, liberal, and generous disposition, in social life as well as in business matters. His character was that of unflinching honesty and integrity. Never experiencing in his own life the necessity for total abstinence, he never demanded it of or enforced it on others, but he had a thorough disgust for drunkenness. If a workman neglected his employment through intoxication, and repeated the offence after a caution, he was discharged; but if any employé wished a few days' or even weeks' absence for pleasure or for the benefit of health, permission was readily granted. Persons addicted to intemperance, knowing his habits of lecturing them for this weakness, dreaded his approach, and had recourse to the stratagem of escaping over a fence, or disappearing round a corner into some bye-street.

In 1845 Mr. Jacob Bright married Miss Mary Metcalf, a farmer's daughter, a resident of Wensleydale, Yorkshire, who had spent many years of her life in superintending and training his family. She survived her husband. It is pleasant to relate that Mr. John Bright and his family paid great attention to the good old lady, treated her affectionately, and made her long life of ninety-five years smile in age by pleasantries and by a happy home at "Rose Hill," a comfortable dwelling which is situated close to "One Ash." John Bright frequently visited her, and they had pleasant chats together on "by-gone" topics and incidents in connection with his early life. She died only a few years ago.

Mr. Jacob Bright was a man of middle height, straight, and proportionately built, of ruddy complexion, with well-formed features, a pleasant and genial expression of countenance, and "truth, simple truth, was written in his face." His presence and manner diffused a venerable influence over his family circle, and in a slighter degree over his workpeople. It required but little penetration even in strangers to see the genuine charitableness of his disposition, and that he was plain and upright. He was neatly attired in soft brown clothing; a coat cut in the Quaker's style, knee breeches (with gaiters occasionally), and a broad-brimmed hat. The whole facts in his life prove that he was just, just in his relations with his workpeople, and in his conduct towards opponents. He was firm in his religious testi-

monies against Church Rates; kind to the poor and sick, and tender towards children. He was of a cheerful disposition, had a quaint and pleasant humour, and he was genuine in courtesy, noble and generous, and kind to all.

He died at the ripe age of seventy-six on the 7th of July, 1851, at Rose Hill, and was interred in the Friends' graveyard in Rochdale. No ponderous or ostentatious tombstones mark their resting-places, nor posthumous flattery carved on marble appears there to explain the perishableness of humanity—nor names nor epitaphs, for they speak about the good deeds of their dead by their firesides. No yew-trees spread their sable shade, or with shadowy pomp o'erhang these blended graves; but simple mounds in a grass plot, beautifully kept like a garden, with a small headstone, show the peaceful spot where father, mother, brothers, and sisters slumber beneath the turf where daisies grow.

“ Here flattery flies you, and ambitious fame
Shrinks into airy nothing, whence it came.
Here, nor hypocrisy nor mirth is seen,
Nor pride, detested pride, with haughty mien;
But meek humility, and happy peace,
Uninterrupted, dwells within this place;
And calm content, with heavenly aspect mild,
Has blessed the scene, and on the verdure smiled.”

CHAPTER III.

BOYHOOD AND YOUTH.

Birth—Infant Education—A Schoolboy—His Aunt, Miss Margaret Wood—Ackworth and York Schools—At Newton Academy—He Leaves School and Enters his Father's Business—Traits.

“The jarring nations he in peace shall bind,
And with paternal virtues rule mankind.”

IN writing a biography of “the greatest of living orators,” as John Bright has been described by the highest authorities, and one of the most remarkable statesmen in the annals of modern England, much difficulty has been experienced in finding information which has never before been published; and this has been partly owing to the seclusion and modesty of Mr. Bright, and his dislike to being lionized. As a consequence, stories have been promulgated which have misrepresented the noblest disposition and the wisest intellect, and covered, as with a cloud, some of the real individual worth of the right hon. gentleman, whose whole public life has been devoted to the amelioration of the industrial classes and the poor. He sought their happiness rather than glory, and his memory is linked to most of the great national blessings of his day.

The life of such a patriot must always prove interesting and instructive, and the passing incidents in the career of such a man are memorable. The general wish is to know more about him—to possess his thoughts, views, and opinions on all the absorbing topics that have arisen during his life, and to hear under what aspect he is disposed to regard the present fertile period of important changes. With his policy are bound up the hopes of the peaceful and well-affected part of the community; and the rising generation would do well to emulate the career of this great Englishman.

“One anecdote of a man,” Channing once declared, “is worth a volume of biography;” and as we are impressed with the force of this remark, it is our intention, besides resetting gems that adorn Mr. Bright's speeches, to weave into the biography interesting information which is not generally known, and which has been collected specially and solely for this work. His personal character, his habits, his little tastes and peculiari-

ties which survive in anecdotes, are all interesting, and will make us more acquainted with him. This information will illustrate the honourable consistency of his career, and show whether the whole course and tenor of his private life was in perfect harmony with the brilliancy and the success of his public service, or whether his intellect was worn like a stage garment, to be doffed when convenient.

If a man devotes his life for the benefit of mankind, humanity fancies they have a right to discuss the perfections and foibles of a distinguished genius, to sum up his merits and defects, and to deduce from them useful, literary, and moral lessons, for the improvement of the science of human nature. That men of the highest merit are not exempt from human infirmity cannot be denied, and there are few even of the wisest and the best who, when closely examined, will not, like the diamond, exhibit some flaw to detract from the purity of their lustre. Bright and noble characters have been sprinkled here and there in all ages, but at no period has a greater number than at the present time been found wishful to aid in some ennobling cause for the benefit of their fellow-men.

The curiosity of mankind delights in detecting the failings of those whose talents or whose fortune have placed them in a distinguished position. In the inmost privacy of Mr. Bright's life, there is no marked or displeasing distinction between the professions and the fame of the statesman and the pursuits and principles of the man. There is nothing to palliate, far less to conceal. That his character is impregnated with all the severest principles of honour and justice, is an admitted truth; and for the milder affections of the heart, and for all the qualities that exalt ordinary life, he is as remarkable as for his genius or his eloquence.

Frequently, with public men, many worthy acts and unselfish deeds pass unnoticed, to be remembered only after death. The love of

“Our slippery people,
Is never linked to the deser^{ver}
Till his deserts are passed.”

Strangers, too, constantly recognise worth which those more immediately benefited have failed to appreciate. Services valued too late remind us of posies strewn over graves—they may be gratifying to the living, they are nothing to the dead. Justice, however, though it may be slow, is sure, and posterity will arise and, awarding its becoming meed to fame, confer immortality.

On the night of November 16th, 1811, there was ushered into the world the second son of Martha and Jacob Bright, at their

homely dwelling at Greenbank, Rochdale. The child was so delicate that many fears were felt that he would never survive, but by unremitting care he gained strength, and became a fine boy.

"Childhood shows the man,
As morning shows the day."

He was destined to pass through life untainted by the deceptions and sophistries of the world; and certainly, as he rose to manhood, he was never led astray by either personal interest or by the desire for popularity.

His infant education was confided to a Quakeress named Miss Harrison, whose father was the manager for Mr. Jacob Bright. There was a group of cottages near to the residence of Mr. Bright, which were named "Greenbank Cottages," and one of the number was fitted up as a schoolroom, with a playground in front, which was separated from the green fields by palings. It was in this homely cottage that he, with some of his brothers and sisters, received the first rudiments of his education.

The elementary part of his training having been completed, we next find him trudging to Mr. William Littlewood's famous school at Townhead, with "shining morning face," but not "like snail unwillingly to school," attired in corduroy trowsers, and cloth jacket and vest. He showed no precocious talents, but possessed an aptitude for mental acquirements, to which his excellent home training must have given an impetus, as well as moulding his character, and brought out those grand abilities which have illustrated his long and unsullied career. John Bright was one of the youngest in the school, and was a great favourite with the schoolmaster's step-mother (the widow of the late Rev. Thomas Littlewood, Baptist minister), who was a venerable and superior and well-educated lady, and who had a great influence over her step-son. The schoolboys were well aware of John Bright's popularity, and when they wished for a holiday, he was deputed by them to make his way into the snug parlour where the good lady sat, and ask her influence in bringing about a holiday. Her kindly intercession seldom failed in releasing the juveniles from school restraint for a brief period, and the popularity of the young deputy rose amongst his schoolmates in proportion to his usefulness.

The instruction at Mr. Littlewood's school imparted a sound, fundamental, elementary education, such as the mental capacity of children could analyse and digest, for he was

opposed to the plan of learning by rote, as he preferred to cultivate the understanding. He soon discovered the superior ability of his pupil, and it has been affirmed by those who were present that he took more than usual interest in Bright, who even at that time manifested indications of tenderness of heart, combined with firmness of purpose, of steadfast attachment to those who had gained his affections, and of fancy easy to be excited.

“ Broken seems almost every tie that links
That day to this—and to the child the man.
The world is altered quite in all its thoughts,
In all its works and ways, its sights and sounds;
The old familiar faces from the streets,
One after one, have now all disappeared,
And sober sires are they who then were sons.”

He was a good player at football and cricket. In summer he often bathed in the river Roach, near Hamer Bottom's Mill, at a place called “ Littlewood's Meadow,” or “ The Meetings,” and was an expert swimmer; the water, of course, in those days was not polluted. In this meadow on the bank of the river in true joviality of heart, with his companions he leaped, raced, and played, with features rosy-flushed, which was a relief from the “ dry drudgery at the desk's dead wood.”

He was remarkably fond of dogs, but those of his choice could not be described as handsome, their only redeeming features being their bright eyes when they scanned their master, and their faithfulness. In fact, they had a resemblance to Launce's dog “ Crab,” without the mischievousness. This generous sympathy with the canine race has often been manifested through life, and is still seen in the veteran of seventy-two, for he has been observed to take kindly notice in the streets of any old acquaintances of that species. He appreciates their trait of faithfulness; and those within his household “ are first to welcome ” him, and “ foremost to defend.”

Most children have a particular liking for sweetmeats, and Master Bright was no exception to the general rule. He was a great favourite with Miss Margaret Wood, his aunt, who was a confectioner, and resided at “ Rose Hill,” a house not far from the site of the present “ One Ash.” Miss Wood and her servant were out one day, when her little nephew John, and a companion of his, named Joseph Bancroft, who was learning the cotton trade at Mr. Jacob Bright's mill, came to the house, and finding the key in the usual place, entered. They at once set about making toffy in a new frying-pan lined with tin; but when they began to test their confectionery, they found to their

astonishment that it was adulterated with metal. Next day Miss Wood discovered that the tin lining of her pan was burnt off, and suspecting the mischief had been done by her most frequent visitor, John, upbraided him by saying, "John, what were you doing to spoil my new pan? All of the tin is melted off." "Ah, aunt," said John, "we wondered how it was there were so many pellets in our toffy." Master Bancroft grew up to be a successful manufacturer, and emigrated to America.

The sorrows of boyhood are transient and soon forgotten, even by natures as sensitive as was that of John Bright. He was expert at marble playing, which like most pleasures was sometimes followed by pain. During the hours of recreation he indulged in a game on Cronkeyshaw Common, with some boys taller than himself, and of rougher disposition. He succeeded in winning their marbles, which so exasperated them that they knocked the marbles out of his hand, made a scramble, and ran away with most of the treasure. This act of petty theft so outraged the boy's sense of justice, that it caused a momentary flow of tears. His father coming up at the time, inquired what was the matter, and receiving an explanation, remarked, "Well, do you like it, John?" "No," said the injured boy. "Then," replied the father, "do not play again with such rough boys." The love of amusement was keener than resentment, for next day he again returned to his available competitors, to learn by similar experience, which in one way prepared him to cope with the crafty sophistries and subtlety of the world.

At the age of ten, young Bright was sent to Ackworth School, Yorkshire, for about twelve months, and a schoolmaster, who was then usher at Ackworth School, and two schoolfellows, have kindly furnished the author of this work with statements of what they remember of John Bright's school career. The school superintendent at that time was Mr. Robert Whitaker. The boys' school numbered about 180 pupils, and was arranged into four classes, and Mr. Thomas Brown was the master of the class in which John Bright was placed. The usual routine was reading, spelling, grammar (Lindley Murray's), the outlines of analysis of sentences, writing, arithmetic, geography, the elements of English composition, algebra, elements of mathematics, history, and Holy Scripture. The whole school curriculum, if not comprehensive, was well and thoroughly taught. The most noticeable feature of his character at that period of his life was an independence of action, with a degree of the pugnacity of the Lancashire character. There appeared something sterling about him, and an earnestness in what he set himself to do. It was a

difficult matter to command his attention, but when it was once fixed, he was quick at apprehension. He was active and rather industrious. From Ackworth, after a year's schooling there, John Bright was sent to the school at York (off Walmgate Bar), founded by the Friends for their own members, which was intended for the children of middle-class people. Mr. William Simpson was then master of that school, and John Bright made an impression upon his schoolfellows, becoming a general favourite. If the boys were kept beyond the proper hour, as sometimes happened, when the master or principal usher was out of humour or unmindful of the lapse of time, Bright would boldly call out, "Please, it is past the hour." A good English education was given at this school, and some Latin and French. Bright was farther advanced in the classics than any, with the exception of one boy. At this time he was a healthy-minded, good-natured, and orderly-conducted boy, but his schoolfellows in after-life did not remember any striking feature in his character that indicated his future brilliant career. Mr. Thomas Harvey (of Leeds), who was at school at Ackworth with John Bright, many years after asked Mr. William Simpson if Bright gave evidence when under his tuition of his great power, and he replied:—"John Bright was a boy that always maintained a good position in the class with apparent ease, but did not otherwise distinguish himself."

From York, Bright was removed to a school at Newton, situated about six miles from Clitheroe. Those that remember him there, recollect a spirited boy, the very opposite of a coward, but yet not quarrelsome. He was popular, and had influence with his schoolfellows. The master was a Mr. Francis Wills, an Irishman, who was pretty well read in the classics. He is by some of the pupils looked back upon as a second-rate teacher, being rather impatient, irritable, and of opinion moreover, that fishing and foot-ball were detrimental to the more important scholastic exercises; still it was thought that the roughness of the district gave some decision of character and energy which had its influence in after-life. No one feels a keener enjoyment than Mr. Bright in a rich and beautiful country of cornfields, woods, meadows, and gentle rivers, where every tree and every blade of grass attain their full luxuriant growth, and to wander among bleak and barren mountains is an equal pleasure to him. With the former he is captivated, and filled with wonder; with the latter he is astonished, and led on to contemplation, for they carry back his imagination to a date before the creation of man. In after-years, when his hair was silvered

with grey, in referring to the Newton Academy, he said :—“ The last of the schools I was at was the one with regard to which I have most pleasant recollections, for it was situated in a very nice valley, and by the side of a very pleasant river, and the studies were not forced upon us with undue harshness, but we spent a good deal of time in birds-nesting, and fishing in the river Hodder, chiefly for trout, and frequently, during the summer months, in bathing and swimming in one of the pools of that pleasant stream. I did not get much of what is called education. What I got was something—I had almost said—far better : for I got, I believe, whatever store of good health I have had from that time to this.” In conversation with his family Mr. Bright often referred to those happy “ boyhood’s years far faded on the verge of memory.” Trains of thoughtless schoolboys revived the recollections ; or the return of spring, the sight of early flowers, the glimpse of a nest ; or sometimes a forgotten song, or certain strains of music, have brought to his mind the hallowed recollections of by-gone events, and the impressions made by the beautiful and the sublime. The golden hopes of his innocent schooldays, and his dreams of happiness, the edifices of unsubstantial bliss he found melted away as soon as erected, and the schemes projected for the future without a probability of their completion, were amongst the cherished illusions.

Young Bright’s health having improved during his stay at Newton, the powers of his mind began to develop themselves. He was more thoughtful than other youths at that age, and often made quaint, mature, and wise remarks. The general expression of his countenance had become very much like his father’s—a beautiful, mild, and intelligent eye, fringed with long and dark lashes, an expansive and noble forehead, over which hung in thick clusters his rich brown, naturally curly, hair. He became more sedate, and the fine qualities of benevolence and methodical arrangement which had been inculcated by his mother, and a brave and generous nature, became more perceptible. About the age of fifteen he returned to Rochdale. Late in life Mr. Bright, commenting on his school-days, remarked that he was anxious to leave school, but now he was not sure he was wise in doing so. He thought it would have been better if he had stayed a year or two longer, but he then thought that school was irksome, and that he would be better at home. It was not so easy as some people supposed, to carry on the education which they got at school under the different condition of things into which they were introduced when they left. He recommended boys to keep up to some extent, as they have opportunity, the studies in which they

were engaged at school, in the languages, if it was in the languages, or in any other branch; and always, if possible, to keep up a constantly-widening acquaintance with good books. Young Bright assisted his father in the management of his cotton manufactories as soon as he left school, as it was Mr. Jacob Bright's wish that his son should tread in his footsteps, and, like himself, gain a high position in the manufacturing world. The youth was not very particular as to the description of labour he should take part in, for he would wield the sledge-hammer in the smithy of the manufactory, or the pen in the counting-house. One day he was found by his father in the warehouse with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, assisting the workmen in lifting bales of cotton. Mr. Bright, knowing that his son, although he looked robust, was really delicate, discouraged him in this laborious part of the business, but allowed him to learn warping and all the other branches so as to make himself proficient in every department.

An incident occurred about this time which is worth relating. Mr. John Bright, and an old servant named Absalom Mason, who had charge of the horses, and prided himself on his knowledge of horseflesh, visited Smallbridge to buy a horse that had been offered for sale. The animal after going through the usual minute examination was purchased, and Mr. John Bright mounted to ride it to its new home. As the animal was trotting along it fell on its knees over some stones on the road, and the youthful rider rolled over its head, but fortunately escaped injury. Absalom was highly indignant about the slight wounds on the horse's knees, and thought more about the horse than any injury sustained by his young master. The youth was very attentive in his visits to the stable to examine and inquire how the horse progressed, but each time Absalom's indignation was beyond bounds, for he could not forget the damage done to the horse from the selling point of view; and according to his notion the abraded knees were as serious as some national calamity, and of far greater importance than the escape of his young master.

He was also in the habit of frequently exercising and testing his physical powers by wrestling, and in 1882, when delivering prizes to the boys at Trinity College School, at Stratford-on-Avon, Mr. Bright said, "I recollect very well how my shins were kicked when I was a boy in playing at foot-ball by some rude and boisterous lads, when I was not competent, from sensitiveness and rather delicate health, fairly to meet them."

During this time Mr. Bright was devoting his leisure hours

to self-culture, especially to the study of history and poetry, and directed his attention to practical and useful rather than abstruse subjects, and posted himself well up in all the topics of the day. These studies gave a distinct and abiding direction to his best energies. His temper was genial, his sagacity practical, and his foresight clear. He divided his time pretty evenly between business and study; his business no less than his studies assisting in the formation of the breadth of mind and the cultivation of that native eloquence which, in latter years, have so fully distinguished him. As is common in Lancashire with persons in Mr. Jacob Bright's condition in life, he undervalued a classical education, and as soon as his sons had attained a suitable age they were put to some employment in his mill. Had Mr. John Bright enjoyed an educational training, such as the English and Scotch Universities bestow, he would undoubtedly have found his path much smoother, and attained the position he now holds at a much earlier period. It must be added that what he might have thus gained in ease and distinction would probably have been purchased at a loss of strength and independence. His chief characteristic was a thorough earnestness—a trait he has maintained through life—and which, with his simplicity of diction, has animated his hearers on every subject he has touched. The grandest point in his oratorical skill was that he appeared entirely possessed by the feelings he wished to inspire—

“Those who would make us feel must feel themselves”—

and this has been the force that has swept his audience along in his opinions.

Another noticeable trait in his character was shown at an early age, and that was his exactitude, a characteristic which he has maintained through life. As an instance, it may be mentioned that on one occasion his brother undertook to calculate some accounts in the mill, and Mr. John Bright examining them found that they were incorrect by one, and hastened to apprise his brother of the fact, calling out that there was an error in the total. The brother replied that it could not be far wrong. Mr. John Bright replied that it was wrong by one. The brother with a careless air remarked, “Oh, what is *one*?” Mr. John Bright contended that it was wrong, and although slightly incorrect, it was wrong, and ought to be right.

CHAPTER IV.

POPULAR AGITATIONS.

Causes of Distress amongst the Working Classes at the beginning of the Century—The "Reformers" meet at Cronkeyshaw—The "Blanketeers" of Manchester—Large Procession formed in Rochdale—Marches to Manchester—Dispersed by the Military—The "Peterloo Massacre"—Mr. Bright begins to take an interest in the Struggle—The *Evening Mail*.

To explain the condition of the working class and the influences affecting them, it will be necessary to advert to the time when the subject of our biography was only six years old, and to trace the local events which most likely operated upon his mind from that period, and which in some measure tended to develop the decision of character which he subsequently manifested.

During the war with France, which terminated with the battle of Waterloo, the farmers made high profits, as they had in their hands an almost entire monopoly of the corn trade; but the landlords gradually raised their rents in proportion. At this period of profit and prosperity to the landlord and tenant, the mass of the people suffered from the high prices of food and increased taxation. The first consequences of the recoil from war to peace brought an increased severity, both amongst the agricultural and commercial classes. An inclement season and deficient harvest pressed heavily upon the farmers. The landed interest made this prevailing distress a pretext for the introduction of the corn law, which soon spread its baneful influence amongst the masses of the labouring class, and general discontent and outcries for Parliamentary reform rang out in almost every part of the country, and developed itself in energetic movements amongst the artisans for the redress of grievances. Although the Government made inquiries as to the cause of these risings they misunderstood the real object, and passed four Acts for the suppression of popular opinion, giving power to the magistrates and police to interfere with any meeting for the mildest reforms. They also suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, which enabled the magistrates to imprison at pleasure and without trial. The Government engaged secret spies, and amongst the number the notorious Oliver, who encouraged the leaders of Reform to acts of sedition, so that they

might become amenable to the law, and thus the rewards of the agents be increased. Fortunately, many of the reform leaders saw through the stratagems, and evaded them. Some, however, fell into the snares, and were punished. Other party leaders who promoted meetings for lawful objects were misunderstood, and also suffered imprisonment. The legislation was solely for the protection of property, and those who made the laws narrowed the signification of the term into exclusive limits. The pheasant of the squire was sacred, the labour of a working man was a fit subject for spoliation; a poacher was qualified for a gaol, and a taxer of bread was qualified for the Senate. The distress of the working classes was ignored, or, if admitted, spoken of contemptuously, and treated with haughty disdain. The discontented were described as a "ragged crew," a "gang of deluded, beggarly wretches;" as if their poverty was their fault, and as if their ignorance was not the fault of their richer fellow-men, who might have placed education within their reach.

In March, 1817, a meeting of "Reformers" was held at Cronkeyshaw, near Mr. Jacob Bright's residence, and Mr. Samuel Bamford, of Middleton (afterwards the celebrated author of "Passages in the Life of a Radical"), was one of the speakers. The town wore an appearance of alarm, and a detachment of soldiers was under arms in the main street. The meeting was well attended, and "the hearts of the people seemed to warm in proportion to the merciless cold of the wind and rain," which raged during the whole of the proceedings. The poor red-coats were still under arms when the meeting broke up, though, as one of the woollen weavers remarked, they would be of little use should they be wanted, as the water was running into the muzzles of their guns. "They might squirt us," he said, "but could not shoot us."

About twenty of the inhabitants of Rochdale after this meeting joined the "Blanketeers" of Manchester on their march to London, on the 10th of March, 1817, with a petition to the Prince Regent, thinking that an open exhibition of their numbers and misery would create commiseration; but upon the Riot Act being read in St. Peter's Field, Manchester, where they assembled, most of them speedily made their way back to Rochdale, and the scheme turned out a total failure. Many of the individuals had blankets, rugs, or large coats rolled up and tied, knapsack-like, on their backs, to serve as night wrappers on the road in case of indoor accommodation being unattainable. Some carried bundles under their arms, some had papers (supposed to be petitions) rolled up, and others had stout walking-sticks; but

at Lancashire Hill, near Stockport, they were overtaken by the military, and several hundreds were captured. Some received sabre wounds, and a cottager who was standing by as a spectator was shot dead. Others escaping continued their journey to Macclesfield, where they arrived at nine o'clock at night. Next morning the greater portion made their way home; others were captured and imprisoned. About fifty went on to Leek; but the number dwindled down to twenty by the time that Ashbourne was reached; and here they were so disheartened that they were glad to retrace their steps homeward. Mr. James Leach, Spotland Bridge, and Mr. Robert Collinge, woollen weaver, of the same place, formed the deputation from Rochdale; but while at a conference at Manchester, a few minutes before the meeting was held in St. Peter's Field, Oliver, "the spy," who had quietly urged the people to hold secret meetings and to enforce their rights by physical force, betrayed them to Mr. Nadin, the deputy-chief constable of Manchester, and Mr. James Leach and others were captured; but Collinge, as soon as the police entered the room, jumped through the window and made his escape. Mr. Leach was conveyed to London and imprisoned. Mr. Samuel Bamford, who was imprisoned some time after, became a fellow-prisoner of Mr. Leach, who was much affected, and expressed great anxiety as to the duration of his punishment, and whether it were likely to end in a capital charge, or be merely detention as a State prisoner. On the 28th of January, 1818, a Bill was introduced into Parliament to restore the Habeas Corpus Act; and on the 10th of March an Indemnity Bill passed, and the State prisoners were released, Mr. James Leach being amongst the number. The Radicals made a subscription, and set him up in business and patronised him. He made green candles, a symbol of Radicalism; these becoming very popular, he himself became rich.

On the 24th of June, 1819, a meeting was held on Cronkeyshaw Common, close to Mr. Bright's residence, "for the purpose of obtaining a reform in the corrupt House of Commons, and to make a solemn appeal to the people of Great Britain." Mr. Fitton presided, and the other speakers were Messrs. Knight, Harrison (schoolmaster), Saxton, and Broadhurst. A procession had paraded the streets of the town, headed by a band, and flags were displayed with the following words inscribed upon them:—"No Corn Laws," "Annual Parliaments," &c. A cap of liberty was exhibited on the platform. There were about 3,000 persons present. The chairman regarded the recommendation at Manchester to form armed associations against the Reformers as a plan to set one part of the people against the other, and

cause them to cut each other's throats. He recommended the Reformers to arm themselves, which would enable them to keep the peace and to procure their rights. He concluded by moving a string of resolutions, which were carried unanimously. Mr. Harrison, in the course of his speech, said they did not wish to meddle with the Royal Family except to reduce their incomes, nor would they make much alteration in the House of Lords. The people had in vain petitioned and remonstrated for their rights; but they would not wait much longer, and would seize them with their own hands. Votes of thanks were tendered to Mr. Henry Hunt, Major Cartwright, Mr. Woollen, Mr. Sherwin, and Mr. Cobbett for their labours in the cause of reform. The military and the civil powers were in readiness in case of a riot, but all passed off peaceably.

Early on Monday morning the 16th of August, 1819, a procession of about 1,000 persons formed in Rochdale, with a band at its head, and with flags flying marched to Manchester, for the purpose of attending the great and memorable Reform meeting near St. Peter's Church. On the road they joined the Middleton column, and the whole numbered at least 6,000 men. The procession was arranged thus:—Twelve of the most comely and decent-looking youths, who were placed in two rows of six each, with each a branch of laurel held presented in his hand as a token of amity and peace; then followed the men of several districts in fives, then the band of music, then the colours: a blue one of silk, with inscription in golden letters, "Unity and Strength, Liberty and Fraternity;" a green one of silk, with golden letters, "Parliaments Annual," "Suffrage Universal;" and betwixt them, on a staff, a handsome cap of crimson velvet with a tuft of laurel, and the cap tastefully braided with the word "Libertas" in front. Next were placed the remainder of the men of the districts in fives. Every hundred men had a leader, who was distinguished by a sprig of laurel in his hat; others, similarly distinguished, were appointed over these, and the whole were to obey the directions of a principal conductor, who took his place at the head of the column, with a bugleman to sound his orders. Mr. Samuel Bamford, in addressing the assembly, reminded them that they were going to attend the most important meeting that had ever been held for Parliamentary Reform, and he hoped their conduct would be marked by a steadiness and seriousness befitting the occasion, and such as would cast shame upon their enemies, who had always represented the Reformers as a mob-like rabble, but they would see they were

not so that day. As the column moved along to Manchester, about two hundred handsome girls, the sweethearts of some of the lads in the procession, danced to the music or sang snatches of popular songs, whilst on each side of the line walked some thousands of stragglers.

The day before, the borough-reeves and constables of Manchester and Salford issued a notice, in which they "earnestly recommended the peaceable and well-disposed inhabitants of this town, as much as possible, to remain in their own houses during the whole of the following day, and to keep their children and servants within doors." At eleven o'clock in the forenoon of the 16th the Rev. W. R. Hay, J.P. (afterwards Vicar of Rochdale), the Rev. M. Ethelstone, J.P., Mr. Ralph Wright, J.P., Mr. Wm. Marriott, J.P., Mr. James Norris, J.P., Mr. Trafford, J.P., the Rev. M. Mallory, J.P., Mr. William Houghton, J.P., Mr. T. W. Tatton, J.P., Mr. Ralph Fletcher, J.P., Mr. J. Sylvester, J.P., and Mr. Robert Fielden, J.P., assembled at a gentleman's house in Mount Street, which commanded an uninterrupted view of the whole area of the ground where the meeting was to be held near St. Peter's Church. At last the processions arrived, and as they advanced towards the hustings they were received with great cheering. The large plot of ground was densely crowded by nearly 50,000 men and women in gay attire; bands of music, flags, caps of liberty, and paraphernalia heightened the effect. The vast assembly was orderly and attentive. Mr. Henry Hunt presided, and was surrounded by Messrs. Joseph Johnson, John Thacker Saxton, John Knight, of Manchester; James Moorhouse, of Stockport; Mr. Cheetham, of High Street, Rochdale; — Carlile, Robert Jones, Robert Wild, George Swift, and Samuel Bamford. As soon as the chairman in his opening address referred to the magistrates, the Manchester and Salford Cavalry, under the command of Major Trafford, suddenly trotted on to the ground, and formed in line before the house in which the magistrates were placed. The chairman called upon the multitude to give three cheers for the cavalry, taking off his hat and waving it, and the people responded heartily. The cavalry and the whole of the peace officers replied by cheering, the former at the same time brandishing their sabres. A short consultation now took place amongst the justices, and they immediately issued warrants for the apprehension of Henry Hunt, Joseph Johnson, John Knight, and James Moorhouse. Mr. Joseph Nadin, the deputy constable of Manchester, accompanied by a host of special constables, was

appointed to arrest the delinquents, and the Manchester and Salford Cavalry dashed forward into the crowd. The Riot Act was read by the Rev. Mr. Ethelstone and by Mr. John Sylvester, but the people were not aware of it and no time was allowed them to disperse. The cavalry, not respecting age or sex, began to cut down the people that were not able to get out of their way, and a scene of terror and confusion ensued on the attempt to escape. Some of the people pelted the cavalry with stones. Men, youths, and women were indiscriminately sabred or trampled down. In ten minutes from the commencement of the havoc the field was an open and almost deserted space, with the exception of the mounds of dead and wounded. Henry Hunt, John Knight, Elizabeth Gaunt, and Joseph Johnson, brush-maker, Manchester, were dragged by Nadin and his assistants to the magistrates. James Moorhouse, of Stockport, Thacker Saxton, printer of the *Manchester Observer*, Samuel Bamford, of Middleton, Dr. Healey, of Lees, near Oldham, Messrs. Jones, Swift, Wilde, and Mrs. Hargreaves were afterwards apprehended and imprisoned. The Prince Regent Cheshire Cavalry, under the charge of Lieut-Col. Townsend, the 15th Hussars, and the Royal Artillery train, here made their appearance on the ground. "The sun looked down through a sultry and motionless air. The curtains and blinds of the windows within view were all closed. A gentleman or two might occasionally be seen looking out from a new house, near the door of which a group of persons (special constables) were collected, and apparently in conversation. Others were assisting the wounded or carrying off the dead. The hustings remained, with a few broken and hewed flag-staves erect, and a torn and gashed banner or two drooping, whilst over the whole field were strewn caps, bonnets, hats, shawls, and shoes, and other parts of male and female dress, trampled, torn, and bloody. The yeomanry had dismounted—some were easing their horses' girths, others adjusting their accoutrements, and some wiping their sabres. Several mounds of human beings still remained where they had fallen, crushed down and smothered. Some of these were still groaning, others with staring eyes were gasping for breath, and others would never breathe more. All was silent, save those low sounds, and the occasional snorting and pawing of steeds. Persons might sometimes be noticed peeping from attics and over the tall ridgings of houses, but they quickly withdrew as if fearful of being observed, or unable to sustain the full gaze of a scene so hideous and abhorrent."

As Henry Hunt was dragged to the magistrates he received forty or fifty blows from the special constables, and one endeavoured to knock his brains out with a stick, while the others hooted him. The Rev. W. R. Hay came forward and said he respected the feelings of the good and loyal, but as Hunt was now a prisoner and in the hands of the law he hoped that no expression would be given which would endanger Hunt's personal security, and that they would be satisfied to let him pass to the New Bailey prison with their silent contempt. This sentiment was applauded by the special constables and their friends. When the Reformers fled from the field, they went in all directions. Those who meant to go north ran southward. Fear marked the countenances of all. They knew not whither they were fleeing. Some went two or three miles on a road before they dared make inquiries, and then had to retrace their steps. The Infirmary was crowded with the injured, and one of the surgeons conducted himself very improperly. A poor man had both his shoulders dislocated and one arm broken. He had received cuts across his hands and forehead. When taken to the Infirmary a surgeon was about to attend to his injuries, when another surgeon entered and accosted the patient with "Ha, ha! you have been to the meeting, I see? I think you will know better than go to any more such meetings?" "After what I have seen to-day," the poor man replied, "I'm of opinion that Reform is more necessary than ever." "Oh! you rascal, you are, are you? Then you shan't stay here." The man was at once pulled out of his bed, his clothes forced upon him, and he had to drag his dislocated limbs seven miles to his home. Oppression may have prevented some individuals from proclaiming their opinions, but truth continued to work in private, and reared pupils.

Those persons who had gone to the meeting in procession from Rochdale made their way back in haste in small groups to Middleton. There they formed into procession, their band struck up "See the conquering hero comes!" and they marched towards Rochdale. Upon arriving near Trubsmithy, one of the scouts brought the alarming news that the road was blockaded by some soldiers a short distance further on, and the procession breaking up rapidly, the Rochdaliens scampered over the fields and ditches to their native town. A company of soldiers during the day arrived in Rochdale to prevent the people from congregating in large numbers and making any disturbance; and they stacked their guns in Broadfield, but their services were not required. Only two of the Rochdale party were wounded,

namely, Abel Ashworth, of Church Stile, and Thomas Kershaw, of Lowerplace. Eleven persons were killed, and 420 were wounded; of this number 113 were females—mothers, sisters, and children—and fourteen of them had received sabre cuts.

Many of Mr. Jacob Bright's workpeople having accompanied the procession to Manchester had witnessed the massacre on the occasion, and some on the evening of that memorable day were seen on Cronkeyshaw Common, with a number of persons around them, relating what they had witnessed. Mr. John Bright, who at that time was only eight years of age, with thoughtful face and "with wonder-waiting eyes," formed one of the group of listeners, and, like Peterkin, suggested the words, "Now tell us what 'twas all about?" The story was a repetition of old Caspar's:—

"But what they fought each other for
I could not well make out."

The young enthusiast was not satisfied with the bare story of the procession and massacre, but wanted thoroughly to understand the whole dispute:—

"'But what good came of it at last?'
"'Why, that I cannot tell,' said he,
"'But 'twas a 'brutal' victory.'"

The reports of the discreditable onslaught appearing in the newspapers, a feeling of indignation rose throughout the country. Lord Palmerston, who at this time was Secretary of War, defended in the House of Commons the massacre, by declaring that the services of the troops had been rendered necessary "by the machinations of the traitors against those liberties which Englishmen had derived from their forefathers, and which he trusted they would transmit unimpaired to their children." On the 27th of August Lord Sidmouth sent a message of thanks from the Prince Regent to the Manchester magistrates, and Major Trafford and the military serving under him, "for their prompt decision and efficient measures for the preservation of the public peace." Meetings, however, were held in most of the principal cities and towns, resolutions of condemnation were passed on the magistrates and the military, and subscriptions were raised on behalf of the injured.

The yeomanry were charged with the crimes, but grand juries threw out the bills. The magistrates refused warrants against persons intended to be prosecuted for capital felonies, and the general opinion formed by the public was that the magistrates had abused the power that had been placed in their

hands, as they contrasted the peaceable termination of all the meetings that had been held elsewhere.

The Rev. W. R. Hay, who had acted as chairman at the meeting of magistrates at the "Peterloo massacre," subsequently received the appointment of Vicar of Rochdale, at a salary of £2,400 a year, on account, it was said, of the part he had enacted; and up to his death he was called "the Peterloo butcher," and was frequently insulted on public occasions and in the streets with the unenviable epithet.

Two other reverend gentlemen had acted with him in the disgraceful proceedings of the massacre, and, instead of carrying out the injunction of our Redeemer, whom they professed to serve, they played an unenviable and irreligious part on that memorable day. Clergymen of their description would doubtless puzzle our natural philosophers, but uncertainties of the same kind are to be found in all departments of zoology. The hen pheasant will occasionally assume the plumage of the male; the maggot, from which in ordinary states of the bee republic a common worker would proceed, will in seasons of difficulty produce a queen, and from the chrysalis, out of which we expected to see a timid moth emerge, will sometimes fly a fierce and cannibal chneumon.

In May, 1827, there was a turn-out of woollen weavers in Rochdale, through the reducing by some of the manufacturers of the scale of prices in a list that they had agreed to in the year 1824. The shuttles were gathered by the dissatisfied weavers, and the town was placed in the utmost state of alarm. A list was again agreed to, but some manufacturers did not adhere to it. On the 2nd of May, 1829, a serious riot occurred, and eight persons were killed. On the 17th of August, 1830, a meeting was held on Cronkeyshaw Common, close to Mr. Bright's residence, for the purpose of more fully detailing the plan of the "National Association" for the protection of labour. At that meeting the speakers attributed the miserable condition of the working classes to the general reduction of wages, and it was explained that this association had been formed to prevent such a state of things. In 1831 the working classes in Rochdale were in a most wretched condition, only about one-third of the woollen weavers were in work, and the earnings of one of the best hands did not average more than six shillings per week. About one-half of the whole number—about eight hundred operatives—with those depending upon them, were more or less in actual want of the necessities of life, and every person who applied for relief bore in most cases

evident and lamentable testimony to the truth of their heart-rending condition. In fact, at that time no person living remembered greater distress in Rochdale and the surrounding towns. The sturdy, bright-eyed lad occasionally mingled with the crowd, and listened eagerly to the fiery speeches, in which the leaders of the movement denounced their oppressors, and laid bare their poverty and sufferings.

The great struggle for the Reform Bill of 1832 absorbed the attention of Mr. Bright for many years before it became law. Referring to those early days in later years he said, "My first knowledge of Birmingham was of the meetings on Newhall Hill. I was not there except in spirit. I was young then, and, I suppose some people would say, foolish. If so, I was foolish in a folly that has lasted now for more than forty years. But I know that at that time such was the excitement in my father's house that we began to take in the *Evening Mail*, I think it was—that was an issue of the *Times* newspaper three days in the week. We had never dreamt of taking more than a weekly paper. Up to that time we took the *Manchester Guardian*, price 7d., published on Saturdays only. Well, the *Evening Mail* at that time had magnificent articles, which, I am told, some people connected with the *Times* have since regretted. I read those articles to my father and family in the evening. They were very stormy articles. They gave much information; and I date some portion of my political activity to the influence of that paper in those days. And I read there of your great meetings, and all the country read of them, and all the country was stirred to its very heart by what you did at that time. And what was done was that the greatest measure that the English Parliament has ever known was passed."

On May 19th, 1832, an open-air meeting was held in front of the Wellington Hotel, Drake-street, Rochdale, approving of the course pursued by Earl Grey and his colleagues with regard to the Reform Bill, and praying His Majesty that, if the Peers mutilated the bill, he would resume the original compact between the Crown and the people. Then followed the Reform festival on the 22nd of August, 1832, and the first election of a member of Parliament for Rochdale on the 12th of December, 1832. All these incidents, with the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, the subject of Catholic Emancipation, the Revolution in France in 1830, when Charles X. sought our shores as a refugee and Louis Philippe ascended the throne of France, made a deep impression on the inquiring mind of Mr. Bright. He was often seen seeking information from older and more experienced

persons—and indeed from boyhood he had received in the family the surname of “The Thinker.” Besides all these incidents, from the day of his birth the “dignitaries” of the Church had seized goods from his father’s premises, under warrants, for Church Rates. From the year 1811 to 1833 the warrants issued numbered twenty-one, and the value of the goods taken amounted to £109 16s. 3d. Lessons thus inculcated were not likely to be soon forgotten, and as “a desire to resist oppression is implanted in the nature of man” it was not surprising to find in later years Mr. Bright taking an active part to abolish these imposts.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY PUBLIC SPEECHES.

The Temperance Cause in Rochdale—First Speech—"Fair View"—At Mill Bottom—Advice of the Rev. John Aldis—In the Old Theatre, Toad Lane—Mr. Buckingham's Prophecy—Charles Howarth—John Hill.

As Mr. Bright arrived at manhood he carried himself erect, and had apparently a robust frame. His general bearing was decided, and he possessed a degree of determination which enabled him to carry out any scheme that he undertook. His whole demeanour commanded respect, and impressed the observer with the idea that his morals were of the highest order. He appeared like one who had resolved to "tread a righteous path." At this age his heart and mind leaned in the direction of a public career, as if he were determined to devote himself to the guiding of the working class upward to a better day. He honoured candour, detested false pretence, spurned the sordid and the low, was dauntless in mingling with the strife of minds, and his is

"The steady arm that breaks the oppressor's blow,
The heart that melts at undeserved distress,
The hand that hastens with its prompt redress."

The principles that take the deepest root are those implanted during the seasons of childhood and youth. The pupil takes early lessons from everything around him, and his character and habits are forming before he has any consciousness of his reasoning powers.

When by some favouring chance a man discovers the peculiar bent of his genius, and when by a happy fate he is enabled to follow its direction, the foundation is laid for future eminence, though much subsequent exertion and continued perseverance will be requisite to raise the superstructure. It is not solely in the higher pursuits of science and literature that a predisposing and decided genius is necessary to perfection. For instance, Mozart might have made an indifferent philosopher; Sir Isaac Newton, an inferior musician; Milton a bad painter, and Raphael a second-rate poet.

In 1830, Messrs. John Bright, Oliver Ormerod, Thomas Booth, and other gentlemen introduced the Temperance cause

into Rochdale, and one of the first lecturers they brought forward in the Theatre in Toad Lane was the Rev. Mr. Crookshank, who was at that time known as the "Dundee Carter." Subsequently the Rev. Mr. Thistlewaite, Vicar of Bolton, and other gentlemen spoke on the subject of temperance, under the auspices of the admirers of total abstinence. These ardent pioneers of the cause, anxious to boldly advocate their principles, and at the same time test their oratorical powers, thought it advisable first to practise on a simple rustic audience. Accordingly they secured the use of a Unitarian School in a remote country district, within five minutes' walk of the foot of Rooley Moor Road, which leads over the moor into the valley of Rossendale, and known as Catley Lane Head, a short distance above Spotland Fold, near Rochdale. The room was about twelve yards long and six yards in width, so that although the place was crowded the audience was appalling neither in numbers nor in intelligence. On the way it was arranged between Mr. Bright and Mr. Oliver Ormerod, that in case of any nervous hesitancy there should be a manifestation of applause, until the speaker took heart and recovered himself. Mr. Bright, in beginning his address was very nervous, but gained confidence as he proceeded,—“Courage mounteth with occasion,”—delivered his speech with effect, and was warmly applauded.

The building is now becoming a place of historical interest, though it no longer exists as a school, for it has been converted into two cottages. It still retains its own original name, “Fair View,” which doubtless was applied from the expanse of pleasant scenery stretched out before it, for it overlooks the valley which gave birth to the statesman who there made his maiden speech.

Having gone successfully through the initiatory exercise, the young orator ventured to address an audience near the heart of the town. The building selected was the old chapel at Lowerplace. The news became circulated that a number of “unfledged speakers” was going to “spout” on temperance. The edifice was crowded, long before the time of commencing the meeting, by persons who came there chiefly out of curiosity. Amongst the aspirants were John Bright and Oliver Ormerod, who both acquitted themselves creditably.

Thus began the public career of two benefactors of mankind, and although both were equal in point of education and energy, nature had gifted one with a marvellous voice, clear perception, and a grasp over his subject, so that it required only the average amount of application to develop the accomplished

orator. The other, although he had gone through years of exercise at speech-making, could not fairly be called an average speaker; thus showing that the real orator, like the poet or musician, is born, and not produced by culture. Oratory, then, was not the line in which Mr. Ormerod was destined to benefit his fellow-men; yet his life was one of the most useful, for he devoted a large proportion of his time during half a century to Sunday-school labours, and to the visiting of the sick and distressed, carrying his work out in a quiet and unobtrusive way. At the close of his earthly career the friend of his early days did not forget to visit him. "You have done a great work, sir, in your life," said the dying Christian. To which Mr. Bright soothingly replied:—"You have worked as hard. My work has been of a public character, but yours has been not the less useful."

During his peregrinations in the cause of temperance Mr. Bright visited Mill Bottom, and the following amusing story was heard by one of the Rochdallians who was present. "Wot's tis felly com'n here for?" said one of a crowd of old women collected together during Mr. Bright's address. "Wot's he com'n for; is he for puttin these October shops deawn, 'at he's tawkin o' that rate?" "Yes," replied a gentleman who sat in a gig, "that's his very errand; and he intends as soon as he gets into Parliament to make a law that you shall all have rum in your tea." "Eh! dus he?" exclaimed the old woman, "why then, that's th' chap for us!"

Mr. Bright, attending a meeting in a country place, remarked to a friend, as soon as he arrived, that he had hurried, being afraid he should be too late, as country people often kept their clocks fast; and he added, "I have always found that when they keep their clocks too fast the people are always too slow."

The Rev. John Aldis, Baptist Minister, of Plymouth, relates an incident that occurred when Mr. John Bright had entered on his twenty-first year. The rev. gentleman, in the year 1832, was stationed at Manchester, and was invited to Rochdale to speak at a Bible Society Meeting in the Friends' Meeting House. He spent the afternoon at a tradesman's residence, at the bottom of Yorkshire Street, and shortly before the hour appointed for the meeting his friend expressed his regret that being unexpectedly busy he should not be able to attend the meeting, but added that he had invited a young "Friend," who was also to speak at the meeting, to bear him company there. We will give the remainder of the story in the exact words of the Rev. John

Aldis, who has kindly communicated it for publication in the present work :—" Soon a slender, modest, young gentleman came, who soon surprised me by his intelligence and thoughtfulness. I took his arm on the way to the meeting, and I thought he seemed nervous. I think it was his first public speech, at all events in such connection. It was very eloquent and powerful, and carried away the meeting; but it was elaborate and memoriter. On our way back, as I congratulated him, he said that such efforts cost him too dear, and asked me how I spoke so easily. I then took the full advantage of my seniority to set fully my notions, which I need not repeat here except this: that in his case, as in most, I thought it would be best not to burden the memory too much, but having carefully prepared and committed any portions when special effect was desired, merely to put down other things in the desired order, leaving the wording of them to the moment. Years rolled away. I had entirely forgotten the name of the young 'Friend,' when the Free Trade Bazaar was held in London. One of those engaged for it—Mr. Baker, of Stockport—calling on me, asked if I had called on Mr. Bright. I said I had not been able to attend the meetings, and did not personally know him at all. He replied, 'You must, for I heard him say that you gave him his first lesson in public speaking.' I went to a subsequent meeting, and recognised the young 'Friend' of 1832."

There is no doubt that Mr. Bright possessed natural powers of oratory that required very little training, for with the greatest ease, in the course of a short time, he could keep assemblies of men entranced by the charms of eloquence. His arguments were practical, and made what was merely a commonplace duty appear as a glorious and elevating work; they touched the hearts of his hearers as religion or poetry would touch them, and his flight of oratory, rising to a climax, would end with a choice sentence, giving it all the beauty of a full-blown rose.

Fortitude, justice, and self-devotion have found their adequate expression in his labours. His sentiments uniformly tended to improve human nature and to humble human pride; no one could mistake his sincerity, and, although fearless, he was as gentle as a child. He possessed nearly all the qualifications that Cicero lays down as absolutely necessary for an orator. "The orator," says that incomparable master of the art he teaches, "besides an elevation of the mind, solidity of judgment, an excursiveness of imagination, and an intimate acquaintance with science and literature, must have a clear

and distinct voice, an attractive countenance, a neat and animated delivery, a strength of lungs, and a conformation of figure, which is calculated to give authority to everything he utters." Many of these qualities were conspicuous in the hero of our narrative.

Early in life he adopted the Shakspearian motto, "Be just and fear not," as his guide, and we all know how closely he has followed its teaching. The course of his life, too, shows that he also acted on the further advice of Wolsey, and that all his aims have been the aims of his country, his God, and of the truth.

In December, 1833, Mr. J. S. Buckingham, who at that time represented the town of Sheffield in Parliament, delivered a course of lectures in the old theatre in Toad Lane, Rochdale, on "Palestine and Egypt." On the evening of the last lecture, when Mr. Buckingham resumed his seat, Mr. John Bright, finding that no other gentleman rose to propose a vote of thanks, stood up and delivered the following speech, in which may be traced the unfoldings of his future greatness, and which shadows forth the intervening gradations by which he mounted to eminence. In the early part of it he showed signs of great nervousness, but as he proceeded he gained confidence, and astonished his fellow-townsmen by his graphic and interesting survey of the scenes traversed by the lecturer.

"For the last five or six evenings," said Mr. Bright, "we have listened with intense and increasing delight to the eloquent addresses of the gentleman, the sound of whose voice still lingers in our ears, and before this numerous assembly separates I think there is one thing which remains to be done; and though I am convinced it would have been better had some one older than myself undertaken to do it, still as there seemed no disposition on the part of those who surrounded me to mention it, I have presumed to bring it under your notice. Under the able guidance of an experienced traveller we have visited the classical land of Egypt, the wonders of her splendid cities have been investigated, the tombs of her Pharaohs and of their subjects have been explored. We have even ascended the giant pyramid, and from its summit have surveyed in imagination the splendid prospect so beautifully, so poetically described to us—the glorious sun rising in the east proclaiming the approach of day, the silvery moon sinking in the pathless waste of sand, as if unable or unwilling to compare with his superior brilliancy. We have traversed the barren sands of Arabia, and have, as it were, feasted our eyes upon the beauties of the oases of the desert. We have admired the nobleness of soul which so eminently characterises the wandering tribes, and have paid our tribute of respect to that spirit of independence whose fire burns in their breasts as brightly now as in ages long gone by. We have heard with feelings of solemnity and of unspeakable interest the animated description of the present condition of Palestine; we have viewed with astonishment the lofty cedar of Lebanon, the witness of a thousand years, and the unvarying fertility of Mount Hermon; we have trod the calm and peaceful retreats of the Mount of Olives, and have perambulated the streets of Jerusalem, the most renowned city on the face of the earth, and as we gazed on Calvary the recollection of the momentous transactions with which it will ever be associated awakened in us feelings which it would be vain for me to attempt to describe. From the summit of a neighbouring hill we have beheld Damascus in all its beauty, its fertile plain, its broad streams, its glittering minarets, its lofty

domes, almost realising to the fancy the existence of a paradise upon earth. Again we have wandered at leisure along the banks of those majestic, those magnificent streams, the Tigris and the Euphrates, and have felt sad at beholding the complete desolation of Nineveh and Babylon. We have journeyed on to Bagdad, a city whose very name is synonymous with splendour; we have admired the vastness and simplicity of its mosques, the variety of its caravansaries, the splendour of its baths, the extent of its bazaars, and I doubt not we have received impressions in some degree favourable as to the manners and customs of Eastern life. This evening we have penetrated into that grand country situated between the Indus and the Ganges, that land which our imagination has pictured as ever teeming with wealth,

Where, from fountains ever flowing,
Indian realms their treasures pour.

We have seen how that wealth may be rendered available to England, and how the blessings of civilization and Christianity may be spread abroad in that vast empire. We have also had a clear view of that which to this country is most important of all—the immense field which there exists for the extension of British commerce and for the consumption of British manufactures. I say, then, that for the instruction and delight we have received, our best thanks are due to the honourable gentleman, and I am sure that the sentiments will be responded to by every person now present, and that a forest of hands will attest the unanimity of feeling on this subject. I shall therefore conclude by moving that the warm thanks of this meeting be presented to J. S. Buckingham, Esq., for his kindness in coming amongst us, and that we tender him the assurance of our best wishes for his future prosperity and happiness.”

The whole assembly applauded enthusiastically, for such command of language and descriptive powers in so young a man had taken them by surprise. Even Mr. Buckingham was so impressed that he said privately to Mr. James Ecroyd, a townsman, who had taken a leading part in arranging for the lectures, “Mark my words, if that young man lives, he will become one of the greatest orators in England.” How truly this prophecy has been realised all the world knows.

At this time he was only twenty-two years of age, but most men who have become eminent have shown signs of masterly intellect early in life, though not often in boyhood. For instance, Hume wrote his Treatise on Human Nature while he was yet quite a young man. Sir Isaac Newton was not twenty when he saw the apple fall to the ground. Harvey described the circulation of the blood at eighteen. Berkeley was only six-and-twenty when he published his Essay on Vision. Hartley’s great principle was developed in an inaugural dissertation at College. Hobbes put forth his metaphysical system very soon after he quitted the service of Lord Bacon. Galileo, Leibnitz, and Euler commenced their career of discovery quite young.

Up to the year 1833 Mr. Bright was a member of the Rochdale Cricket Club, and took a prominent part in its matches. He played twelve games during the year, and was considered an average cricketer. Batting was his special part. His attention becoming absorbed in politics about that year, he played cricket only a few times afterwards, giving up the “willow,” which

he had handled with moderate skill, for the purpose of devoting his attention and great powers of mind to matters of world-wide importance and utility, and not many years after he began to give utterance to "thoughts that breathe and words that burn."

It is a trite saying that practice makes perfect, and truth cannot be found without some labour and concentration of mind. Now, Mr. Bright, in order to improve his debating powers, and at the same time glean information, chose an old Radical named Charles Howarth, one of his father's workmen, who resided at Great Howarth, to operate upon, in the office of whetstone. As the machinery was clanking away these two would argue various topics. The young man stated his propositions clearly and coolly, the old man combated them until he frequently worked himself into a rage, and in the end was thoroughly worsted. It was by this practice, in conjunction with the intelligent veteran Radical we have named, that Mr. Bright sharpened his debating powers.

Although on many occasions the discussion waxed warm, and ended in defeat on the one side and triumph on the other, both disputants were gainers. The old man was often presented with a welcome silver crown of the realm as a salve for his wounded feelings and discomfiture, and that the young orator certainly improved by these exercises there can be no reason to doubt.

"Some the swift-gliding shuttle throw,
While some of genius more refined
With head and tongue assist mankind."

If there be any person who can equal a sailor in telling a "yarn" it certainly is an old soldier, and perhaps with a greater degree of truth in the narration. An old man, named John Hill, who had been a soldier for twenty-eight years, was in his autumnal days employed by Mr. Jacob Bright. He was a man who had received a fair education, was intelligent, had undergone a great deal of hardship, had taken part in several battles, and his life had been somewhat adventurous. Mr. Bright was often to be seen listening by the hour to the descriptions of the privations in the life of a soldier, and of heart-rending scenes on the battlefield, which were set forth with the animation of an Othello; and often the old veteran

"Wept o'er his wounds or tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch and showed how fields were won."

This might seem unworthy of notice, but no doubt it had its effect on the mind of the future statesman, who has all through his public career been an advocate for peace.

CHAPTER VI.

INCREASING INTEREST IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MATTERS.

The Reform Agitation—First Scheme of Reform Proposed—It is Abandoned—Indignation throughout the Country—Ultimate Triumph of the People—Mr. Bright goes to London for the First Time—His Sympathy for Ireland—The Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society—Travels.

TRAINED in the factory to intelligent labour Mr. Bright learnt by steady application not only the processes of manufacture, but also the art of directing and governing the great numbers of persons there employed, and in the exercise of his daily duties he showed a high degree of energy, readiness, and versatility. He attended the Manchester market regularly, and was considered a first-class salesman. But he took a longer time to pay the workpeople than any other person who used to attend to this department. It was, however, owing to his making inquiry into what accommodation they had in their houses, and gleaning other information concerning their domestic arrangements. To Mr. Samuel Tweedale, the manager, on one occasion he said that some of the workpeople had only one bed-room, and such a state of things must be altered if it was possible. Accordingly Mr. Bright had a fine row of cottages erected, which consisted of two bed-rooms, with two good-sized rooms downstairs, and a cellar and garden. These cottages were called "Mizzy Buildings" (the name of an old farmhouse that had once stood on the estate), and it is easily inferred from these facts that his desire was to raise the condition of the poor, "to make men happy and to keep them so."

It has been a habit of Mr. Bright's, through life, to gain knowledge on particular topics from reliable sources, and often from men specially employed in different occupations, preferring practical knowledge to theoretical, and thus he has been enabled to make himself master of any subject by personal observation, of all matters affecting the welfare of the poorer classes.

When John Bright had arrived at the age of twenty the Reform Agitation was at its height, and he watched it with an interest far beyond his years. The adjustment of the inequalities of the system of representation had been delayed

for many years, for it had been proposed in 1782 by Mr. Pitt, but the motion was lost by a majority of twenty, and similar motions in the years 1783 and 1785 were lost by majorities of forty-four and seventy-four. The horror inspired by the excesses of the French Revolution caused a reaction and the repressio : for a time of all liberal tendencies, and it was not until some time after the close of the French war that the desire for reform again manifested itself. The distressed condition of the working class added to the dissatisfaction, and meetings were held not only in Rochdale but all over the country. On the resignation of the Duke of Wellington, on the 16th of November, 1830, the Reform Ministry of Earl Grey came into office. On the 3rd of February, 1831, Parliament assembled, and on the 1st of March Lord John Russell proposed his first scheme of Reform. The inhabitants of Rochdale, Tories as well as Liberals, when they discovered that the Reform Bill did not provide for the representation of their town in Parliament, formed a deputation which waited upon Lord John Russell, who repaired the oversight. The discussion in the House of Commons on the Reform Bill was lengthy, and on the second reading it passed by a majority of only one. On the motion for a committee, General Gascoyne moved, as an amendment, that the number of representatives for England and Wales should not be diminished, and the amendment was carried by a majority of eight.

The ministry abandoned the bill, and resorted to a dissolution. "The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill," was the cry raised throughout the country; and on the 14th of June when the next Parliament assembled, it was found that there was a large majority in support of the bill, which was again introduced on the 24th of June, and passed the third reading in the House of Commons by a majority of 113. The House of Lords, on the second reading, threw it out by a majority of forty-one, and Parliament was immediately prorogued. The inhabitants of Rochdale, like those of other towns, were so enraged, that a requisition was presented to the high constable (Mr. Henry Kelsall) requesting him to convene a meeting, to "address his Majesty and ministers on the rejection of the Reform Bill by the House of Lords, contrary to the almost unanimous wish of the nation, and to entreat his Majesty to retain his present ministry in office, in whose integrity the people have entire confidence, and further to pray that his Majesty will adopt such measures known to the constitution as are suitable to the exigencies of the times." The meeting was accordingly

held, on the 12th of October, 1832, at the Wellington Hotel, and resolutions were passed in favour of the bill, and his Majesty was counselled to assume the original compact between his Majesty and his subjects. On the 6th of December Parliament reassembled, and on the 12th of that month the third Reform Bill was introduced by Lord Russell. It did not, like the former bills, diminish the number of members, and the opposition considered this a concession and improvement; and on the third reading the majority numbered 116, and the bill was sent up to the House of Lords, where the second reading was carried by a majority of nine. Lord Lyndhurst, in committee, carried, by a majority of thirty-five, a motion that the disenfranchising clause should be postponed, and the enfranchising first considered, on which, the king having refused to accede to a creation of peers sufficient to carry the bill, the ministry resigned. This caused great agitation throughout the country, and at length the government were induced to resume office on the king granting full powers to secure majorities by the creation of peers; but a sufficient number of lords absented themselves for the purpose of leaving the ministers a majority on the third reading, when the bill passed by a majority of eighty-four.

On the 13th of April, 1832, Mr. John Bright left Market Street, Manchester, at eight o'clock in the evening, outside a stage coach called the "Peveril of the Peak," for the purpose of visiting London for the first time; and travelling all night and the next day he arrived in the metropolis at five o'clock in the afternoon, the journey having taken altogether twenty-one hours.

"It happened to be the very night," said Mr. Bright, in referring to the event, "when the House of Lords were discussing the second reading of the great Reform Bill (cheers), and during the 14th of April, I think it was, as we were travelling along the road, some passengers observed something coming towards us, but still in the distance, and we all looked with great interest. We saw horses galloping and carriages coming at a speed which would much have left behind our coach if they had been going in the same way. By-and-by we saw two chaises with four horses, each chaise having two or three men inside, and they were throwing out placards from each window as they went past, galloping as hard as it was possible for horses to travel. These were express chaises coming from London, bringing the news to all the people of the country—for there were no telegraphs then, and no railways—of the glorious triumphs of popular principles even in the House of Lords, for that House had sat all night—I do not know how long it sat the previous nights—and it was not till seven in the morning that the House divided, and the second reading of that great measure was carried by a majority of nine votes (cheers). Well I recollect that occasion, and it has always been to me a pleasure to think of the excitement this caused amongst us coach passengers when we found what was the business and the message of those gentlemen in the expresses."

To him it was pleasant and instructive to visit the scene, enriched with classical recollections, for there is scarcely one of

our illustrious countrymen who has not either first beheld the light within its walls, pursued his avocations within its circuit, or laid his bones to rest beneath its soil. Our statesmen, our most celebrated wits and scholars, our men of science, poets, and philanthropists, have almost all of them left some memory of their existence within the boundaries of the metropolis; indeed, Mr. Bright would rather become a resident of that city where Hampden and Pym defended the cause of the people, and where Russell bled, and where Milton warbled the rapturous soul of song and sovereign ecstacy, than be an inhabitant of the country in which Virgil sang and Brutus struck for liberty. As he gazed from a distance upon the sombre majesty of the atmosphere above the proud metropolis of Britain, through which he saw dimly, rearing themselves like shadowy giants, her thousand domes and spires, he could not but think how insignificant is man, lost amid the stupendous work of his own hands. A moment's reflection must have given birth to the thought as to what are its riches or its beauty compared to the moral grandeur reaped through many an age of strife and turmoil and revolution. Her aspect was new to him. He was a stranger to her walls, but names which occurred to his mind recalled vividly the scenes of past history, which till then he had contemplated but in the lifeless pages of the historian.

When Mr. Bright was a young man and a bachelor he manifested a warm sympathy for Ireland. Her deplorable history, from savage barbarism and feudal outrages into the atmosphere of dawning civilisation, was to him a very attractive study. The annals of Ireland he even then considered were a disgrace not only to its natives but to human nature, for it had been cursed with savage chieftains and rebellious slaves, who had rendered her fields little less than the transcript of their crimes, and her history was the story of a people unable or unwilling to sway their own sceptre; and yet too froward or too proud to allow it in the hands of others. They were bad subjects and worse rebels, yet he thought the amelioration of their condition was possible by just legislation rather than by coercion. At this time amongst other Irishmen working at his father's mill was one named Michael Cavannagh, who, after many years' residence in Rochdale, wished to return to his native country to spend a few years with his relatives. During the last week of Michael's sojourn in Rochdale he and one of his fellow-workmen quarrelled, in the card-room of Greenbank Mill, whereupon he took off his clog, and when raising it in a striking attitude, accidentally struck two panes of glass behind him, which arrested

the intended blow. Two shillings were entered against him to be deducted from his earnings, but Mr. John Bright was paying the wages when it came to Cavannagh's turn to present himself, and upon learning the particulars of the affray, he pointed out to the Irishman the impropriety of resorting to brute force. The cost of replacing the panes of glass, however, was not deducted, and his week's earnings were supplemented with an addition to assist him on his journey homeward. The usual benediction which Celts seem unable to withhold when they meet with some large-hearted friend, was poured forth; but Michael's was somewhat original and bordering on the prophetic. "Sir, I wish you luck," said Cavannagh; adding, "may you be king when I return again, and may marrow remain long in your shin bones."

In April, 1833, Mr. John Bright and a number of his friends formed a society, to which they gave the name of "The Rochdale Literary and Philosophical Society." At the first meeting each member signed his name in the minute book; that of Mr. John Bright heads the list. The society became very popular, most of the gentlemen in the town joining it. The rules forbade the introduction of any doctrinal point in religion, or any local party politics for discussion at the meetings. The first meeting was presided over by Mr. John Bright. Mr. John Holgate was appointed secretary, Mr. John Grindrod treasurer, and "the council" for the remainder of the first year were Messrs. John Bright, William Mann, James Ecroyd, G. Craven, J. H. Sellers, R. T. Heape, Joseph Moore, George Morris, William Moore, and the Rev. G. Heaviside. For many years the meetings were held in the Rev. George Heaviside's private schoolroom, which was situated in Baron Street, between Water Street and Kenion Street. The building is now occupied as a machinist's shop. The meeting on the 12th of September was presided over by Mr. John Bright, when Mr. Morris lectured "On Optics," and explained the properties of light, and in the presence of his audience dissected a human eye. At the meeting on the 26th of September Mr. Morris was in the chair, and Mr. John Holgate brought on for discussion, "Is a legal provision of subjects for dissection expedient?" Mr. John Bright took part in the discussion, and the meeting decided (only one voting against it) "That a legal provision of subjects is expedient if confined to the bodies bequeathed for dissection, subject to the relatives' consent, and the bodies of the unclaimed poor who do not express a contrary wish previous to their decease; or, in other words, that the provision made by Government was and is expedient." At the

meeting on the 10th of October, Mr. G. Craven in the chair, Mr. John Bright brought forward as a subject for debate, "From our study of history, ancient and modern, what form of government appears the best suited to promote the happiness of mankind?" The discussion was long and spirited. At last Mr. John Bright submitted the following motion:—"That a limited monarchy is best suited for this country at the present time." The debate, however, was adjourned to the meeting held on the 7th of November; the Rev. G. Heaviside was in the chair. After the subject was further discussed Mr. Bright's motion was put to the meeting, when the votes in its favour numbered eighteen, and against it four. At the next meeting, November 21st, presided over by Mr. J. Littlewood, Mr. Benjamin Heape introduced the subject, "Whether painting, poetry, or music gives more enjoyment to mankind." On a division being taken, one voted for painting, nine for poetry, and ten for music. At the meeting on January 26th, 1834, Mr. James Ecroyd in the chair, Mr. John Bright brought forward the subject, "Is Alfred or Alexander more entitled to the appellation of 'The Great'?" He submitted as his opinion that Alexander did not earn, and therefore was not entitled to, and that Alfred did earn, and therefore had a just claim to, the appellation of Great. No one present dissented from Mr. Bright's opinions, and the meeting unanimously decided in favour of Alfred. The next meeting, on the 13th of February, 1834, was presided over by Mr. O. Ormerod, and a lengthy discussion took place "On the policy or impolicy of laws for the restriction of the importation of corn." Mr. James Ecroyd moved and Mr. Norris seconded, "That laws for restricting the importation of grain are impolitic;" and those present at the meeting were unanimous in the opinion. On March 13th, 1834, Mr. John Holt in the chair, Mr. John Holgate introduced the question, "Is defensive war justifiable on Scriptural grounds?" Making in his remarks a quotation of a doctrinal kind from Scripture, he thus violated a rule of the society; and consequently Mr. John Ormerod submitted a motion, "That the debate on that subject be discontinued." Mr. Thomas Bright seconded the motion, but it was negatived by a majority of fifteen, and the debate was resumed. The motion submitted by Mr. John Holgate was, "That it is justifiable on Scriptural grounds to defend ourselves against the attacks of our enemies." Mr. John Bright maintained, "That it is not justifiable." The Rev. G. Heaviside seconded the amendment, which was carried by a majority of six. Mr. S. Heape

was in the chair at the meeting on the 5th June, 1834, when the Rev. G. Heaviside lectured "On the universal education of the lower classes," and proposed, "That it is the opinion of the meeting that the universal education of the people is necessary." Mr. John Holgate seconded this resolution, which was supported by Mr. John Bright, and unanimously agreed to by the members present. On the 3rd of July the subject of "The moral tendency of public amusements, such as the theatre, circus, &c." was introduced by Mr. John Bright, who submitted the following motion:—"That the moral tendency of public amusements, such as the theatre, circus, &c., is injurious." Mr. James Ecroyd seconded the motion, which was passed.

In the summer months of 1835, Mr. John Bright with Mr. King (manufacturer of Rochdale) went on a tour to the Holy Land, a country he had long wished to explore, for its mysteries, and sublime desolate regions. They visited Gibraltar, Malta, and Egypt on the way, and returning by Smyrna, Constantinople, and Athens, passed through Italy, France, and Belgium homewards. The first meeting he attended on his return was held on the 14th April, 1836, Mr. Bright himself occupying the chair. Mr. Davidson read a paper on Phrenology, and, after a discussion, concluded by moving, "That it is the opinion of this meeting that the system of Phrenology, as promulgated by Gall and Spurzheim, is the only sure basis yet discovered on which to form a correct system of intellectual philosophy." Mr. Chadwick spoke against the motion, and moved an amendment to the effect that the "Science of Phrenology has not been established." Mr. James Petrie strongly opposed the motion, and Mr. Henry Armitage spoke in its favour; Dr. Morris opposed and Mr. Ormerod supported the motion. Upon the votes being taken, six were for the amendment and six for the motion, but it was not stated in the minutes whether Mr. John Bright gave a casting vote one way or the other. At the meeting held on the 5th of May, 1836, presided over by Mr. Ormerod, Mr. John Bright introduced the subject "Of the decline and fall of nations," concluding an interesting lecture by a motion—"That there are causes to which the decline of nations may be attributed without having recourse to the argument that 'nations are subject to the same laws as individuals,' &c." Messrs. Scott, Armitage, and Ecroyd took part in the discussion, and the general opinion was in favour of the resolution.

At the meeting on the 2nd of June Mr. John Bright gave an interesting account of the countries he had visited, and it is to be regretted that a reporter was not present to record his description

of the towns he passed through, his impressions, and the amusing anecdotes he related. A few of the anecdotes are still fresh in the remembrance of some of those who were present, and we shall repeat them. At that time Mr. Bright was a great admirer of the works of Lord Byron, and visited most of the noted places mentioned in that noble monument of genius, "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage." Byron's muse dwells amongst wild scenery, roaming in a region of gloomy grandeur, amongst Alpine precipices and cloud-capped mountains, and Mr. Bright loved to penetrate such regions too. He had not prepared the lecture, nor had he any notes before him; he gave the lecture from memory, and often introduced beautiful passages from Byron.

"Adieu, adieu! my native shore
Fades o'er the waters blue;
The night-winds sigh, the breakers roar,
And shrieks the wild sea-mew.

Yon sun that sets upon the sea
We follow in his flight;
Farewell awhile to him and thee,
My native land—Good Night!"

During Mr. Bright's voyage in the Mediterranean an amusing incident occurred, of which he was an eye-witness. A lady (evidently a spinster) was one of his fellow-passengers on board. She made a particular fuss and manifested a great deal of anxiety about her lapdog, which was nursed with a motherly care, and which received from her the most lavish affection. One day while the passengers were in the saloon at dinner it was found that the heat was oppressive and unbearable; so, to admit a little fresh air, a window looking on the deck was suddenly opened, when down fell the lapdog, which had been basking in the sun above, into the soup-tureen on the dining-table. On this unexpected downfall and addition to their soup, the passengers, notwithstanding the splash which accompanied the sudden advent, were unable to suppress their mirth, and hearty roars of laughter resounded throughout the saloon, whilst the lady, the darling of whose solicitude had thus suddenly disappeared, on hearing of the sad mishap to her little pet became almost frantic, and poured out a wail of lamentation. Fortunately for her future happiness, it turned out that her favourite was not much the worse for its warm immersion in the tureen.

Another anecdote related by Mr. John Bright can hardly fail to produce the impression that our sailors are not the best authorities to initiate foreigners into the art of speaking the

English language with propriety. When Mr. Bright arrived at Constantinople a number of boys approached the newly-arrived passengers with donkeys, and it would appear that they had learned a few odd words of English from the British tars aforesaid. One boy, addressing the eminent traveller from Rochdale, said, "Now, you beggar, do you want a donkey?" Mr. Bright was somewhat staggered at this rather abrupt and insolent demand, but found that the lad did not understand the precise meaning of the offensive epithet he had used, and did not purposely intend to give offence, but merely wished to convey to the Englishman the fact that he was willing to transport his luggage on his beast of burden to an hotel. The boy, no doubt, believed the expression to be of the politest possible kind, and expressive of the greatest interest in the traveller's welfare. The perfect innocence with which the question was proposed showed that the owner of the donkey was not aware that the objectionable term was not used in decent society, and that such language was applicable only to a mendicant. At any rate it may be considered that the boy thought the offensive word was what Don Juan thought of a certain other vulgar phrase—only a "Salaam," or "God be with you!" It is to be hoped that by this time of day the donkey-drivers of Constantinople have been taught to express themselves in more courteous English than formerly.

It is no wonder that Mr. John Bright had such a longing desire to visit the sacred city of Jerusalem, for it was there our Saviour taught; it was there Christianity was first implanted, and the shadows of the law were superseded by the gospel light; there David sang and the prophets prophesied. No city in the universe has had such a chequered past. It was, therefore, not surprising that Mr. Bright approached this holy city with awe, and gazed upon it with the deepest interest. Mr. Bright gave an interesting description of the Mount of Olives and the valley of Jehoshaphat, amidst whose great rocks and trees stood the tomb of Zacharias, the last of the prophets that were slain. The hallowed spots once curtained within the walls of Jerusalem had disappeared, but he found that the face of nature still endures. The rocks, the mountains, lakes, and valleys were unchanged; save that the loneliness and wildness were now broken only by the occasional crumbling of some fragments from the sacred hills, scaring the wild animals from their dens, and the eagles from their cliffs; yet this was once the scene of prosperity and luxury. Though their glory had departed,

a high and mournful beauty still rested on many of their silent and romantic scenes.

Mr. Bright upon returning home received a warm greeting from his friends, who were as anxious to see him as he was to see them, and who were interested in his conversation as to his tour. He was questioned very minutely, and his accounts of his travels were instructive and entertaining.

Mr. Samuel Greenlees, who had creditably filled the post of secretary for many years, brought before the meeting on the 13th of July, 1836, for discussion, "Was Mary, Queen of Scots, accessory to the death of her husband, Lord Darnley?" The discussion was spirited and protracted, and Mr. Bright was afraid that this unfortunate queen was not entirely clear of the stain, but the meeting came to the conclusion "That the contradictory nature of the evidence adduced by historians of the sixteenth century, makes it impossible to convict or acquit Mary of any accession to the murder."

Mr. Bright next appears at a meeting on the evening of the 31st of May, 1838, when he occupied the chair. The time was principally spent in experimenting with the electrical machine. He was also present at the meeting on the 21st June, and read an essay on the "Success of steam navigation between this country and America, and the spread of civilisation and knowledge consequent thereon." At a special meeting on the 11th of October, convened to discuss the propriety and means of forming an exhibition of philosophical apparatus, &c., Mr. Armitage in the chair, it was decided to form a committee to make a collection for an exhibition. Mr. John Bright headed the list, the other gentlemen being Messrs. W. Buffham, W. A. Scott, G. Heaviside, Henry Birkby, Samuel Worrall, B. Heape, jun., Robert Schofield, James Hamilton, and John Roby. On Monday, the 24th of December, 1838, the exhibition was opened in the Commissioners' Rooms, Smith Street. It was very attractive, and was successful from a pecuniary point of view. It contained an extensive collection of philosophical apparatus, consisting of electric, galvanic, magnetic, and electro-magnetic instruments, air pump, telescopes, microscopes, &c., together with a large collection of preserved quadrupeds, birds, insects, shells, phrenological casts, anatomical preparations, and a number of paintings by ancient and modern artists, numerous engravings, medals, working models of locomotives and other steam engines. There were also several specimens of Chinese carving in ivory and tortoise-shell. A variety of antiquities, including coins, weapons, and habiliments of war; a curious

collection of figures in dress worn by the various castes in India and China, with specimens of their manufactures, and a large number of minerals, fossils, geological specimens, &c. During a period of twelve years the society had engaged eminent men to deliver lectures on various subjects. For instance, Mr. Watt delivered a lecture on "Elocution;" Mr. Roby a course on "Botany," and six on "Tradition as connected with and illustrating history, antiquities, and romance;" Mr. Greenbank, of Manchester, on "Oratory;" Mr. Heigham, a course of four on "Architecture." Dr. Cantor gave six lectures on "Human Physiology." Mr. Elias Hall, of Manchester, delivered three lectures on "Geology;" Mr. Murray, a course on "Chemistry." Mr. Wardleworth gave two on "The Philosophy of Digestion." Mr. F. B. Calvert, Professor of Rhetoric, King's College, Aberdeen, delivered four on "Elocution;" Mr. Rymer Jones entertained the members with six on "Natural History;" Mr. George Thompson followed with a course on "British India;" and Mr. Charles Kemble entertained the Society and its friends with an evening's "Reading from Shakespeare." Besides all this many of the members gave lectures on various subjects, so that this worthy and commendable design for mutual self-improvement and gratification added not a little to Mr. John Bright's knowledge, and tended to strengthen his great mental powers, whilst it afforded useful exercise to that natural gift of speech to which he is largely indebted for his wide-spread influence. However, after the year 1841, his mind becoming more absorbed in his parliamentary duties and the Anti-Corn Law agitation, he subsequently, from the great pressure on his time and attention, attended very few meetings of the Literary Society; and as the greatest of its luminaries, or rather the sun of its system, had disappeared, the members dwindled away, and the society in the course of a few years ceased to exist, and became a thing of the past.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CORN LAWS.

Mr. R. Cobden—Old Enactments Prohibiting the Importation of Grain—Import Duties—Prosperity of the Agriculturalists—Poverty of the People—Unsuccessful Attempts at Legislation—Formation of the “National Anti-Corn-Law League”—Mr. Cobden joins it—Mr. Cobden’s Grandfather—Mr. Cobden as a Speaker—Mr. Villiers.

To connect the threads of the narrative it will be necessary to return to the year 1837, when Mr. Bright took great interest in the subject of popular education, and a meeting was held in the schoolroom of the Baptist Chapel, West-street, Rochdale, to promote education in connection with the establishment of British schools. It was while engaged with this question about that time that Mr. Bright became acquainted with Mr. R. Cobden, whom he visited at his warehouse, in Mosley-street, Manchester, to persuade him to address the meeting at Rochdale. Mr. Cobden’s countenance lit up with pleasure, to find that others were working in promoting this question, and he consented. After speaking there he spent the night at Mr. Jacob Bright’s house, “and from that time to Mr. Cobden’s death,” so spoke Mr. J. Bright at a public meeting, “there had never been any cessation, no interruption whatever, of the friendship which existed between us.” Up to that time they were unknown to one another, but not far removed, and their orbits every day approaching nearer. There was a wonderful likeness in unlikeness between them. Their opposites drew them at once towards each other. In their union they constituted such gentleness and strength, such clearness and force, such sagacity and courage, such knowledge and address, such purity and zeal, that they became irresistible.

In early times, England concurred with the general system of other nations with respect to the importation of grain. First, corn was reserved for home use, then by the 34th Edward III. (1360-61) export was prohibited. In the reign of Richard II. (1394) the lieges were authorised to export grain. By the fourth of Henry VI. (1425) this act was confirmed. Eleven years afterwards a law limited the export, which was renewed in 1441, and made perpetual in 1444. Then came a new light

on the Legislature, and by the 3rd Edward IV., c. 2 (1463), the country gentlemen in the House of Commons had a law passed prohibiting the importation of grain, because "the occupiers of farms within the realm of England are daily grievously endangered by bringing corn out of other lands, and brought into this realm of England when corn of the growing of the realm is at a low price." To prevent this, it was enacted that when a quarter of wheat did not exceed 6s. 8d., rye 4s., and barley 3s., no person should import any of these kinds of grain upon pain of forfeiture thereof. Some time after the proclamation, the landlords transferred their patronage from tillage to pasture, on account of the great demand for wool both abroad and at home. The pastoral state in its turn became discredited; thence the 5th and 6th Edward VI. were passed, entitled "An Act for the maintenance and increase of tillage and corn;" and directing that as much land as was under the plough in a parish at the accession of Henry VIII. should be tilled, and for every acre less the parish should pay 5s., yet the reign of Henry VIII. was far from being characterised by abundant food supplies. The 25th of that king speaks of dearths and scarcities, and prohibits exportation without license from the king. In Elizabeth's reign new poor laws were enacted, and old laws enforcing tillage were re-enacted. Still want of home-grown food continued, and in the reign of James I. the nation was dependent upon foreign lands for their supply of corn. After a run of action and reaction, alternating between plenty and want, agriculture resumed its parliamentary despotism. The duties on imported grain were raised in 1670 to 35s. 4d. per quarter, which was virtually to prohibit its import. The 22nd of Charles II., c. 15, advanced on this extravagance. Wheat might be imported subject to a duty of 16s. when in the home market it did not exceed 54s. 3d., and 8s. when it exceeded 80s. Three years after, by the 25th of Charles II., c. 1, a bounty was granted on the export of grain. William and Mary enacted that a bounty of 5s. was to be paid on every quarter exported, when the price of the quarter of wheat in England did not exceed 48s. The landowner who under the protection might have become dependent upon foreign countries for grain, had, in 1791, a law passed raising the price at which importation might take place from 48s. with 6d. duty, to 54s.; 2s. 6d. was to be charged on import wheat, when the price of English wheat was from 50s. to 54s., and when it was below 50s. imported wheat was to be charged 24s. 3d. the quarter. In 1809 and 1810 our imports of grain exceeded two millions of quarters.

Prices ranged very high during the whole of the period of the Peninsular war, but just at its close there came three good harvests in succession, and prices consequently fell. This was only a pretext for a more stringent corn law, by which the ports were to be once more closed until wheat reached the price of 80s. per quarter.

The high prices of corn during the war with France had not been brought about by legislative interference, but by natural causes, over which Parliament had no control. It had been a period of great prosperity to landlords, during which farmers also had made large fortunes. It was to both a period of un-mixed benefit, and neither class had the slightest ground or pretence to ask of the nation to perpetuate such a state of things. They had derived all the profits from the high prices, and when the natural causes of the high prices no longer existed it was but reasonable and just that high prices should cease. The war had left no taxes or burdens that were not more than shared by the rest of the community ; and though some expenses to farming had risen with the high prices, yet most would speedily have fallen and adjusted themselves to low prices.

If the system of legislative protection which had been so uniformly and unscrupulously followed were a sound one, the farmers ought to have been the most thriving and fortunate of men, since for centuries back their prosperity had been professedly the especial care of Parliament. The agricultural interest has been the one to which all others have been at nearly all times unsparingly sacrificed, and if the measures on behalf of that interest had not answered, it could only have been either because their object was not attainable, or because they were unwisely adapted to their end.

Mr. Frederick Robinson, on the 17th of February, 1815, brought forward in the House of Commons resolutions in favour of prohibiting the importation of wheat when the price was under 80s. per quarter. People in the metropolis protested against this attempt to lay a heavy tax upon their food, and tumults lasted more than a week, but they were quelled by military force. The attention of the country was diverted by Napoleon's escape from Elba, and his landing in France ; and, between the time of his landing and the battle of Waterloo, the Corn Bill was passed, the House being surrounded with bristling bayonets. The people at this time were poor, for they had passed through twenty-two years of war, and were loaded with an enormous debt. A million and a half of lives had been sacrificed, trade had been deranged, and a large number of merchants and manu-

facturers had been ruined. Misery rose out of the obnoxious corn laws, for from them poverty flowed, and overwhelmed the country; its gaunt hand was stretched over the heads of the people, thousands of hearts sank, and the death-rate from that time increased rapidly:—

“And still the coffins came
With their sorrowful trains and slow,
Coffin after coffin still,
A sad and sickening show.”

Sir William Curtis on the 17th of February, 1815, told the landed gentry in the House of Commons that rents had in all cases doubled, and in many cases even trebled during the war; and he saw no right of taxation which could justify the interference of Parliament as to the importation of corn.

In only two years since the period of the passing of the act the annual average of 80s. a quarter had been reached, and those two years were years of scarcity. The farmers who had contracted to pay rents which only a uniform price of 80s. would enable them to pay, were, of course, impoverished or ruined.

Mr. Henry Hunt, in his address to the electors of Westminster, in 1818, said:—“I will never rest for one hour contented while the starvation law, commonly called the Corn Law, remains in force. Since the Act was passed thousands upon thousands have died from famine in a land of plenty. That Act insures riches to the landowners and great farmers, and leaves the tradesman, the journeyman, the mechanic, and labourer to starve. It was a law which recently caused the ports to be closed, and raised the price of bread from 9d. to 1s. 2d., and this only to enrich the landlords and their tenants. Some of the members of the House of Commons were for the Bill when it was introduced and their constituents were petitioning against it. Such men left the poor to starve while they filled their own coffers.”

In 1822 this law had to endure the test of abundance, and therefore a cry of agricultural distress was raised, and the Corn Law of 1822 was substituted for it. In 1826, however, it was necessary to pass a temporary act for the admission of foreign grain. In May of the following year all the bonded corn was released by Parliament, and in September of the same year (1827) the ports were opened for corn till forty days after.

Earl Fitzwilliam, on the 14th of May, 1833, brought before Parliament resolutions for the revision of the Corn Laws, with a view to their repeal, but they were negatived *seriatim* without a division. Mr. Whitmore next introduced a motion, on the

17th of the same month, the object being for an alteration in the principle of the law to one of a moderate fixed duty, but it was thrown out by a majority of 199. Mr. Fryer in the following month tried to get leave to bring in a bill to alter the Corn Act of 1828, with a view to admitting colonial grain free of duty; but he was also unfortunate, for the motion was negatived by 72 to 47, the majority being 25.

On the 4th of February, 1834, Lord Grey's ministry announced through Lord Althorp that it was not their intention to bring forward any measure for the alteration of the law, nor to support such a measure if introduced by others. Mr. Hume next brought forward a motion, on the 3rd of March, 1834, for a committee to consider the propriety of a moderate fixed duty, but it was rejected, and the majority numbered 157. At the close of 1836 there was a commercial collapse, arising out of the monetary crisis in the United States and its action on our commerce, and this collapse was accompanied by a slightly deficient harvest. The foreign exchange turned against us, yet the cause or causes were very imperfectly understood. A large exportation of bullion was going on, and this compelled a great contraction of commercial accommodation, which was aggravated by the discredit thrown on the best houses, owing to the American revolution. But men abused the Bank of England, and forgot the sliding scale. They talked much of currency, and said little about corn, and 1837 was struggled through, and trade seemed to be recovering, when the deficient harvest of 1838 plunged the country into deeper gloom and suffering, and by this time thinking men were laying their finger on the true cause of these disasters.

On the 29th of January, 1834, a meeting of merchants and manufacturers was held in the Exchange Committee room, Manchester, to consider the advisability of agitating for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Messrs. R. H. Greg, R. Potter, M.P., Mark Phillips, M.P., John Shuttleworth, J. B. Smith, J. Brotherton, M.P., and J. C. Dyer addressed the meeting, but the project fell through.

The persons who originated the movement which gave rise to the National Anti-Corn-Law League, founded in Manchester in October, 1838, were seven in number; six Scotchmen and one Irishman, namely, Edward Baxter, of Belfast; W. A. Cunningham, Andrew Dalziel, James Howie, of Edinburgh; James Leslie, Archibald Prentice, and Philip Thomson. Mr. William Rawson was the first Englishman that joined the association, and he acted as the treasurer of the

League. A grand impulse was given to the movement when Mr. R. Cobden joined it, and the agitation was immediately supported by the merchants, traders, and manufacturers of Manchester, with a subscription of £3,000, which was afterwards increased to £6,000. In October, 1838, the provisional committee of the Anti-Corn-Law Association was formed, and the first name on the list was Mr. Elkanah Armitage, and the second Mr. John Bright. Mr. R. Cobden's name was afterwards added to the committee, and his address was given as "Mosley Street," Manchester.

Thirty-four years before this date Mr. Cobden was born at Dunford, a pretty picturesque village on the Sussex Downs, about two miles from Midhurst, in a house where his parents and his ancestors had resided ever since the time of Henry VIII. His father was a small farmer, who died when Richard Cobden was young, and the youth received the rudiments of his education at Midhurst grammar school, under the mastership of Mr. Philip Knight. Master Cobden had there the reputation of an open-hearted, unassuming boy, steady and diligent at the tasks set him, but evincing less quickness of parts than his elder brother, Frederick. At twelve years of age he was transferred to Mr. Clarkson's seminary at Greta, in Yorkshire, where he remained three years. His favourite study was geography. At sixteen he began his apprenticeship to a trade, under the guardianship of an uncle, who was a London warehouseman in Watling Street, and during leisure he devoted his attention to self-culture. His mother was a woman of extraordinary energy, and this is the secret of some of his prominent excellences.

Many of the old inhabitants of Midhurst remember Richard Cobden's grandfather, who resided at an old farmhouse at Dunford, part of which was used as a malt-works, and he went by the name of "Maltster Cobden." He was a substantial yeoman of the old school, and for several years filled the office of chief bailiff of the borough of Midhurst. Some of the villagers also used to speak with delight of the excellent quality of the beer he brewed, and that he had a goat that "butted" the boys who attempted to enter the malt-house and who had no business there; that this goat used to go on to the heath at a certain hour every evening, to bring home Master Cobden's four cows to milk, which it would select out of a large number of others, and take them back again; that there was a lane that went by the name of "Cobden Lane," but after it was enlarged it was called "Petersfield Road." No neighbourhood had witnessed more havoc amongst small farmers than the neighbourhood of Mid-

hurst, and Mr. R. Cobden's father's house at one time was tenanted by labourers.

The agricultural labourers in this district up to the year 1845 were poor, their average wages being eight shillings a week; and Mr. R. Cobden years after at a public meeting at Hereford said, "I plainly and frankly avow to you that if I had not left my father's farm, and gone first to London, thence to Lancashire, I should have been a very poor man indeed. If I had remained on my father's land in Sussex, I should most likely have been very poorly off, for I find a good many of them that were my playfellows have sunk down to the rank of labourers, and some are even working on the roads, breaking stones." Mr. Cobden expressed in prose what the poet Gray worked out so pathetically in rhyme in his *Elegy*, showing how lamentably the education of the poor was neglected, and how difficult it was for even a man of genius to develop his latent faculties whilst ground down by poverty. These obstacles have kept many a man formed to be a light to the world in poverty and darkness to the end of his days, and thus he has "died and made no sign."

A few years ago Mr. John Bright thus described how Mr. R. Cobden left London for Lancashire:—

"From Watling Street, by an accident, it became his duty to come down to the North of England as the agent of the house of business in which he was engaged; and in the North of England his observant and intelligent eye discovered very soon that in Yorkshire or Lancashire—but especially in Yorkshire, with which he became more familiar—there was a field where certain qualities which he felt he possessed would enable him to make his way and to prosper in life. He settled in Manchester, I believe, when he was only twenty-six years of age, about the year 1830, as a calico printer. He had an excellent taste in design and in colour. He had, too, the qualities of a good man of business—industry, intelligence, sagacity, probity of the highest kind; therefore it is not to be wondered at that his success was great, and that it was rapid. But then he had a mind that was expansive and sympathetic, and he could not be content with his ledgers, and his business, and his profits, but his heart went out at once to the great population amongst whom he lived (hear, hear), and he looked around him and saw their condition and their wants, and the first great question, the first great public question, to which he turned his mind, as far as I am able to gather, was the question of public and national education (hear, hear); and I know that the first time I became acquainted with him was in connection with that question. But he not only had this sympathy with regard to what he deemed necessary for the instruction of the people, but he found that their interests were greatly affected by what he thought an unwise foreign policy on the part of his Government and his country, and so early as the year 1834 or 1835 he published a pamphlet under the title of 'England, Ireland, and America,' a pamphlet, I venture to say, of a sagacity and a foresight such as probably has never been excelled by any writer of politics in modern times. In this pamphlet he dwelt at considerable length with the question of Russia and the question of Turkey, because at that time great efforts were being made by some persons to create and to excite jealousy on the part of England against the Empire of Russia and the Russian Government—efforts which have not ceased even to the day on which I am now speaking (hear, hear). I said that the first time I became acquainted with him was in connection with the subject of education. I went over to Manchester to call upon him and ask him if he would be kind enough to come over to Rochdale and speak at an education meeting which was about to be held in the schoolroom of the Baptist Chapel in West Street of that town. I found him in

his office in Mosley Street, and introduced myself to him, and told him what I wanted. His countenance lit up with pleasure to find that there were others that were working in this question, and without hesitation he agreed to come. He came and he spoke, and though he was then so young as a speaker, yet the qualities of his speech were such as remained with him so long as he was able to speak at all—clearness, logic, a conversational eloquence, a persuasiveness which, when conjoined with the absolute truth that there was in his eye and in his countenance, it was impossible to resist (hear, hear, and cheers). After this there came up the question of the Corn Laws, for the skies had lowered and the harvests were bad, and in the year 1838 there was a considerable movement in Manchester, partly by some private individuals and partly, and most importantly, by the Chamber of Commerce; an Anti-Corn-Law Association was formed, which ultimately and soon became the now famous Anti-Corn-Law League (cheers)."

In the fluctuations of trade his uncle proved unfortunate, and Richard Cobden had the gratification of contributing to the old merchant's comfort in his declining years.

The League engaged a room in the upper floor of Newall's Buildings, Market Street, Manchester, to carry on their business. The committee sat in this room, which was divided into two by a red curtain drawn across it, and Mr. Cobden in after-years said that the dingy red curtain was drawn across so that they might not be cast down by the paucity of their numbers. On one occasion during the agitation he remarked to Mr. Prentice, "What a lucky thing it is the monopolists cannot draw aside the curtain, and see how many of us there are; for, if they could, they would not be much frightened." Although the public meetings were well attended, the small numbers at the League's room were rather of frequent occurrence at first, and it was feared that the fact might become known to the Government, and produce a damaging effect. When the agitation became more formidable, Government spies were often on the alert about the building, but the Leaguers were shrewd, and did not communicate more than they wished to be known.

Mr. Cobden in his first attempt at public speaking was more unfortunate than Mr. Bright. His first speech he delivered at a meeting under the presidency of Mr. Prentice, at the Cotton Tree Tavern in Ancoats, Manchester, in furtherance of the scheme for the incorporation of Manchester. The young manufacturer was introduced to the audience by Mr. Prentice as the author of "Some able letters signed 'Libra' which had appeared in the *Manchester Times*." His speech, however, in spite of the flattering reception he received, or perhaps because of it, was a complete failure. He was nervous, confused, incoherent, and in fact practically broke down. Undeterred by so great an oratorical failure, Cobden again and again, with varying success, attempted to gain by practice the art of public speaking. Gradually, as he acquired confidence and became more conscious of his

own power, the nervous hesitation which at first embarrassed him partly disappeared, and although he never became an orator of the very highest class, like Bright, he acquired at last a consummate mastery of easy, clear, and persuasive argument.

On the 15th of March, 1838, Mr. Villiers introduced a motion into the House of Commons, for a committee to consider the operation of the Corn Act of 1828, but it was rejected, and the majority numbered 205.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE CORN LAWS BEGINS.

Discontent among the Labouring Classes—The Chartists—Great Anti-Corn-Law Meeting at Rochdale—Price of Corn at Foreign Ports—Increased Distress amongst the Agricultural Labourers—Mr. Bright devotes himself more and more to Politics—Lectures on the Corn Laws—Helen Priestman—More Meetings.

THE state of the country from the year 1836 to 1840 was deplorable. During these years there was a succession of bad harvests, which had caused provisions to rise to an alarming pitch, whilst a general stagnation of trade had lowered the scale of wages, and made them altogether inadequate to meet these high prices. Then followed pauperism and misery throughout the kingdom to an extent never before witnessed. This state of things inevitably gave rise to the greatest discontent and murmuring among the labouring classes. The Chartists now became popular, and the results of their harangues were shown in the insurrections and mob-risings throughout the country. The feeling of discontent manifested itself also in strikes, and although the outbreaks were vigorously quelled in the large towns, the ill-feeling still smouldered for years, and broke out in various ways in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Yet the Ministry all this time made no attempt to trace out the real cause of distress and discontent. "Food in a house," Cobbett contended, "was a great source of harmony." The same theory, but on a more extended scale, might be applied to a country, and would show that free trade was more than a national blessing, for trade has ever been the pioneer of civilisation, and has with its white sails knitted nation to nation with solid interest in its progress through the world.

On the 2nd of February, 1839, an open air Anti-Corn-Law meeting was held in The Butts, Rochdale. The promoters were perched on a waggon, and some oppositionists brought another waggon alongside to serve as a platform. There were present at least 3,000 persons, chiefly of the working class. Mr. Samuel Taylor moved that Mr. George Ashworth should preside. Mr. James Taylor, of Spotland Bridge, moved an amendment that Mr. Job Plant should take the chair, and the amendment was carried by a large majority. Mr. Plant contended that the total

repeal of the Corn Laws would not at that time benefit the working class at all, and advocated the cause of the Chartists. Mr. John Bright moved the first resolution:—"That it is the opinion of this meeting that the Corn Laws have had the effect of crippling the commerce of the manufactures of the country—have raised up rival manufactories in foreign countries—have been most injurious and oppressive in their operation with the great bulk of our population, and that the working classes have been grievously injured by this monopoly of the landed proprietors." Mr. Bright argued that it was not a party question, because men of all parties—men who wanted ultra-despotism, men who wanted ultra-radicalism—were united upon it. It was not a party question, but a pantry question, a knife-and-fork question, a question between the working millions and the aristocracy. Mr. Poulett Thompson had truly said that for the last two years the manufacturers had been living on their hereditary revenues, and no man of common sense would now enter into the trade. Before the American tariff was laid on, one-fifth of the flannel manufactured in Rochdale went to America, but since that tariff was imposed, which was in consequence of the Corn Laws, there had not been as many pieces sent there as there had been bales before. The same parties who had passed the Corn Laws had passed the new Poor Law. They had also a large standing army, and now it was proposed to have a new rural police. The chairman interrupted Mr. Bright by saying that he was out of order, but a host of persons shouted that he was speaking to the point, and he was permitted to proceed. Mr. Bright contended, at some length, that it was the duty of the Government to protect the rights of industry, and that it was the interest of the working classes to assist in calling for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. Samuel Taylor seconded the motion. Mr. James Taylor, a member of the "National Convention," moved an amendment:—"That it is the opinion of this meeting, that though the Corn Law is an injurious tax, yet the present House of Commons, or any other House of Commons constituted on the present suffrage, will never repeal that law so as to be beneficial to the working classes, and this meeting is of opinion that the present Corn Law agitation is made up for the purpose of diverting the minds of the people from the only remedy for all political grievances; therefore it is necessary that the people must first be in possession of their political rights to effect the repeal of these Corn Laws, and this meeting therefore thinks it useless to petition the House of Commons on this subject while it remains constituted as at present." Mr. William Clark

seconded the amendment, which was carried by a large majority. Three cheers were then given for the Chartists of Birmingham, three cheers for the "National Convention," three groans for the "House of Ill-fame" and the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester, three cheers for Stephens and O'Connor, and the meeting broke up :—

"Sometimes the crowd a proper judgment makes,
But oft they labour under gross mistakes."

The multitude, like the ocean, is very seldom agitated without some definite cause ; both are capable of doing the greatest mischief or the greatest benefit, after the cause which first set them in motion has ceased to act. Such was the case in the agitation that was springing up at this time, and what was wanted was a master mind to guide the force in a right groove. It is remarkable how, in the history of men whose lives are designed to exercise a great quickening influence on society, the way is gradually opened out which leads to the ordained result. They do not for themselves select the high places in the field, but are summoned to them by voices which they dare not disobey. Their call to the noblest forms of work comes out of their diligent attention to the duty lying nearest to their hand.

"Chance will not do the work ; chance sends the breeze,
But if the pilot slumbers at the helm,
The very wind that wafts us towards the port
May dash us on the shelves ; the steersman's part
Is vigilance, blow it rough or smooth."

Mr. Bright had a very retentive memory, and seldom forgot what he read. A knowledge of the past as well as of the present he felt to be necessary to enable him to form a correct judgment, to speak more accurately, to cast aside all that was worthless, and to preserve only what was valuable. He also studied history, so that he might be familiar with the causes of the rise, the progress, and the decline of nations, the virtues by which they have flourished, the vices by which they have fallen, the spirit by which revolutions are brought about, and the march of human events in which what has been is perpetually recurring. In this way he was enabled to form the lessons by which alone a knowledge of the science of politics can be attained. It is only before the mind becomes set in its own opinions or the dogmas of others, that it can have vigour or elasticity to throw off the load of prejudice and seize new and extensive combinations of things. In exploring unknown tracts of speculation the mind strikes out true and original views, and at first, like a drop of water, hesitates what direction it shall take, but after-

wards follows its own course. The very oscillation of the mind in its first search after truth brings together extreme arguments and illustrations that would never occur in a more settled and methodised state of opinion, and felicitous suggestions turn up, which we can have no hope of understanding when we have once made up our minds to a conclusion, and only go over the previous steps that led to it.

He found at that time that corn was offered at every foreign port for half the price charged in England, that it was rejected in consequence of our Corn Laws, and that the distress was the work of the rich. He was enabled to form the opinion that the overstocked condition of our markets was caused by the obnoxious laws, that the wealthy classes on the Continent could not purchase English merchandise because the English did not buy their corn, and that the continental manufacturers were more prosperous owing to provisions being cheaper on the Continent, and consequently the expenses of labour less. At the same time he knew that the work of abolishing the Corn Laws would be severe, as the Parliament was composed of landowners, who were at once judges and parties in the cause.

The long winter of 1838-9 increased the distress, especially amongst the agricultural labourers, as their scanty wages scarcely left them anything for fuel, and afforded nothing for clothing. The peasantry of the south of England were reduced almost to the level of Polish serfs. Their chief food was black bread, made of a mixture of barley-meal and potatoes. Their wages averaged seven shillings per week, and out of that sum they had to pay about one shilling and fourpence for rent; and some families numbered six. Their pale and sunken faces too plainly denoted the emaciated condition they were in.

The campaign against the Corn Laws opened under the most formidable difficulties, and the story of its prosecution is full of interest, for it showed how truth, with steady pace, can make headway against the opposing prejudices and passions of mankind—how strong it is, not only to conquer its enemies, but to convert them into allies—how resolute it is in struggle, and how beneficent in victory. Our narrative will thus be deeper in interest than the most brilliant history of wars that have arrested the progress of nations and devastated the world.

Mr. A. W. Paulton, an active member of the Anti-Corn-Law League, visited Rochdale on the 18th of May, 1839, and delivered a lecture on the Corn Laws, in the Theatre in Toad Lane. Two days after he gave a second lecture on the same subject. Mr. John Bright on the termination of these lectures proposed a

vote of thanks to Mr. Paulton. A friendly discussion followed between Mr. Bright and a number of Chartists, and he urged upon them the necessity of familiarising themselves as to the way in which commercial restrictions or monopolies affected their social happiness and domestic comfort.

The first time Mr. Bright spoke at a public meeting in neighbouring towns was at Bolton, in the Assembly Room, Oxford Street, on the 6th of November, 1839, when a dinner was given to Mr. A. W. Paulton,—who had been lecturing for the League twelve months,—as a mark of respect for his exertions in advocating the repeal of the Corn Laws. About 120 gentlemen were present on the memorable occasion, and amongst the number were Messrs. R. Cobden, J. Brotherton, M.P. for Salford, P. Ainsworth, M.P. for Bolton, C. J. Darbishire, the Mayor of Bolton, who occupied the chair, J. Thomasson, H. Ashworth, E. Ashworth, and Alderman Callender of Manchester. Mr. Bright responded on behalf of the strangers, and Mr. Prentice, in his History of the Anti-Corn-Law League, alluding to this meeting and to Mr. Bright, states that he gave “evidence of his grasp of the subject, of his capacity soon to take a leading part in the great agitation.”

On the 18th and 19th of December, 1839, Mr. Bright presided over meetings held in the Theatre, Toad Lane, of his native town, which were addressed by Mr. Smith. On both evenings questions were put by working men, that indicated an amount of careful consideration of the subject.

During one of Mr. John Bright's visits to a general meeting at Ackworth School, accompanied by one of his sisters, he noticed in the gathering a young lady of superior appearance and manners, with “sweet attractive grace.” While walking in the grounds he prevailed upon his sister to bring about an introduction. She did so, and the intimacy thus commenced ended in a marriage in November, 1839. She was the eldest daughter of Mr. Jonathan Priestman, of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and was refined, natural, lady-like, yet meek and sensible, and interesting in her conversation. She was beloved in a remarkable degree both by her own and her husband's family, being not only lovely in person, but possessed of a character of singular sweetness and purity. Old people in her father's employment remembered her to the end of their lives with a curiously vivid interest and attachment, and in her new home at “One Ash” she made friends with all. Her ancestors were “Friends,” upright and generous people. Her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother, were faithful ministers in that

Society, and people of strong character. On the 10th of October, 1840, at "One Ash," she gave birth to a daughter, who was named Helen Priestman. She became an accomplished young lady, and for many years assisted her father as his amanuensis.

On the 29th of January, 1840, a meeting was held in the Commissioners' Rooms, Smith Street, Rochdale, for the purpose of forming a branch of the Anti-Corn Law League. Mr. James Gibson presided. Mr. John Bright explained the objects of the League, and read some resolutions which had been adopted at a preliminary meeting, held at Tweedale's Hotel, Baillie Street, on the previous Saturday. A committee was formed, with Mr. John Petrie, senior, as chairman, Mr. John Bright treasurer, and Mr. Thomas Stephens secretary. The majority of those present became members, and a few weeks after a petition against the Corn Laws was got up under the superintendence of Mr. Bright, and was sent to the House of Commons. It had 9,700 signatures, and measured 170 feet in length. In the same month Mr. Bright was present at a meeting of the League, held in their extensive pavilion, which was temporarily erected on the site of the "Peterloo Massacre," Manchester. He was one of the delegates from Rochdale, and sat in the body of the assemblage as a listener, and not as a speaker, as his fame had not yet spread much abroad, and he was of a retiring disposition.

On the 17th of March, 1840, a meeting was held in the Commissioners' Rooms, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, for the purpose of adopting a congratulatory address to Her Majesty respecting her marriage. The room was crowded. Mr. C. Royds, a Rochdale banker, called upon Mr. Molesworth to take the chair. Mr. John Bright objected to any gentleman presiding without first receiving the sanction of the meeting. Mr. Royds replied that the gentleman who had called the meeting had decided that Dr. Molesworth should occupy the chair. Mr. John Bright remarked that he should move an amendment, and give those persons assembled an opportunity of making a choice more agreeable to their feelings. He considered that every meeting had a right of electing its own chairman, and he for one should not give up his right. Dr. Molesworth contended that he had a legal right to take the chair, agreeably to the wishes of the gentleman calling the meeting. Mr. Bright replied that if that meeting had been a vestry meeting he would be legally entitled to that post, according to the decision given by the Court of Queen's Bench, but he erred if he fancied that he could claim it as a right at other meetings. Mr. John Roby, excited, said,

"How dare you speak to your elders?" Mr. John Bright, smiling, coolly retorted that there were only two gentlemen present who ought not to preside on that occasion. One was a person who had made himself notorious from home by the violent speech he had made against the lady they were about to congratulate, but they all knew in Rochdale that he was no prophet. A confused scene ensued. Dr. Molesworth, Mr. C. Royds, and a number of other gentlemen were endeavouring to speak at the same time. Mr. Thomas Dearden, the coroner, broke the top of his walking-stick by striking it on the table in trying to restore order. When silence was obtained, Mr. Bright continued to say that he had no objection against Dr. Molesworth for anything that had taken place since he came to reside in Rochdale, but (pulling the *Times* newspaper from his pocket) he had some of his sayings and doings at Canterbury. (Uproar.) Dr. Molesworth remarked that his conduct at the dinner referred to had been brought before the public by the newspapers, and he had given his reasons for the part he had taken upon that occasion. Whenever Mr. Bright began to refer to the dinner at Canterbury an uproar was raised, and cries of "Turn him out;" and at last Dr. Molesworth, after conferring with his friends, said, amid much laughter, "I dissolve this meeting," and Dr. Molesworth and his party began to leave. Mr. Thomas Livsey cried out, "Let that faction leave the room, and the loyal and well-disposed, who have never sullied their character by calumniating the Queen, remain." (Applause.) Mr. W. W. Barton was then called to the chair, and it was decided to adjourn the meeting until eight o'clock in the evening, to give the working class an opportunity of attending. One hour had been spent in deciding as to who should occupy the chair. About four-fifths of those present were Reformers, and they were determined to resent what they considered an insult offered to the Queen by Mr. Roby at a dinner at Ashton, and by Dr. Molesworth at Canterbury. Dr. Molesworth and his friends, after leaving the Commissioners' Rooms, made their way to the Town Hall news-room, belonging to the Market Company, in Lord Street, and held a meeting there. They adopted the address to Her Majesty which should have been proposed at the first meeting, and left it there to receive signatures. At eight o'clock in the evening an open-air meeting was held on a vacant plot of ground off Smith Street, and about 1,500 persons were present. Mr. John Bright was voted into the chair. Mr. John Petrie, sen., one of the gentlemen who had signed the requisition calling the meeting, moved the address to the young Queen, which was

seconded by the Rev. A. Mackay, and carried unanimously, and three hearty cheers were given for the Queen; for men were then in love with monarchy.

It may be as well to explain that on the 30th of October, 1839, a Tory banquet was held at Canterbury, and Mr. Bradshaw, M.P. for Canterbury, made a violent harangue against the Prime Minister and the Queen, saying that Her Majesty was only queen of a faction. The Rev. Dr. Molesworth was present at the banquet and proposed the health of Mr. Bradshaw in complimentary terms, and it was this that gave offence. In January, 1840, a hostile correspondence took place between Mr. Bradshaw and Mr. Horsman, M.P. for Cockermouth, arising out of a statement made by the latter to his constituents that the former "had the tongue of a traitor, but lacked the courage to become a rebel," and further charged him with insulting his Sovereign. A "meeting" was therefore arranged, and shots were interchanged without effect. Mr. Bradshaw thereafter caused his second to express regret for the language made use of, which he felt on reflection was unjust to Her Majesty.

Mr. Roby, at a Conservative dinner at Ashton-under-Lyne, used expressions regarding the Queen and Ministry which compelled the Commander-in-Chief to bring it under the notice of certain officers who were present, reminding them that, as military servants, they were bound to confine themselves to their military duties, and when they thus ventured to connect themselves with any party association, they incurred serious responsibility and exposed themselves to the heaviest blame.

On the 19th of March, 1840, a meeting was held in the Commissioners' Rooms, Rochdale, to appoint delegates to a meeting in London, with reference to the Corn Laws. Mr. John Petrie, sen., occupied the chair. Mr. Bright congratulated those present on the unanimity that prevailed in the town and neighbourhood, in opposition to the Corn Laws, and concluded by proposing that Messrs. George Ashworth, Joseph Fenton, and John Fenton should be the deputation from Rochdale to London on the 24th of the same month. At this time many of the woollen mills were working only three or four days a week, others were at a standstill, and the distress amongst the weavers was appalling.

CHAPTER IX.

OPPOSITION TO CHURCH RATES.

An amicable Attempt to settle the Church Rate Dispute—Struggle between Churchmen and Dissenters—Bright's famous Tombstone Speech—Seizing a Dying Man's Bible for the Rate—Bright and the Clergy—The Result of the Contest—An Attempt to recover the Rate, and how it was Finally Abolished—Contrast between the Past and the Present.

MR. JOHN BRIGHT is next found opposing the Church Rates in Rochdale. The contest was of a most extraordinary character, and surpassed the struggles that have taken place on the same subject in any other town. On Friday, the 10th of July, 1840, a meeting of ratepayers was held to consider the propriety of making a Church Rate for that year. The Rev. Dr. Molesworth presided, and gave his reasons why he could not agree to a voluntary rate, which had been proposed to him by Mr. James Littlewood and Mr. John Petrie. These two gentlemen, on behalf of the Anti-Church Rate party, intimated to the Doctor that they would consent to the laying of the rate provided it was understood that the term "optional" should be annexed to the papers delivered by the collector. Mr. Abraham Brierley, the vicar's warden, moved a rate of a halfpenny in the pound. After a long discussion the motion was put to the meeting, and the chairman declared that the show of hands was in favour of the rate. The opponents demanded a poll, and it was agreed that it should commence on the Monday following, and continue every day till Friday; that the poll should each day open at twelve and close at five. On the Monday at noon the poll opened, and the voters in favour of the rate took the lead for the first fifteen minutes, but the scales then turned, and the opponents of the rate increased their majority every hour, and at the close it was found that 3,976 had voted for the rate and 4,060 against it, giving a majority against it of 84.

Dr. Molesworth and his party feeling dissatisfied at the result called a meeting on the 29th of July, 1840, for the purpose of making a Church Rate. The excitement became intense, and especially when it had been stated by the Anti-Church-Rate party that children had been discharged by employers who were in favour of the rate because their fathers had voted against it. Though the meeting was announced to commence at two o'clock, several

hundred persons had*collected in the churchyard an hour before the time, and there was every appearance of a stormy meeting. St. Chad's Church doors were thrown open at twenty minutes to two, when there was a dreadful rush into the church. Many who were standing on the gravestones near the church door jumped upon the heads of the crowd, and were absolutely carried into the body of the church in a horizontal position. The body of the church was soon filled with about 1,500 people, and hundreds of persons were not able to gain admittance. The noise was as great as if Bedlam had broken loose, and hats were crushed and clothes torn in the scramble for places. At two o'clock the Vicar and Mr. Abraham Brierley, Mr. Charles Butterworth and Mr. Wood, made their appearance in the gallery, and were received with marks of disapprobation and applause. Mr. James Fielden (brother of the then Member of Parliament for Oldham), Mr. John Bright, and Mr. W. W. Barton, took up a position in the pulpit, or reading desk, amidst the cheers of a vast number of persons. It was decided to hold the meeting in the churchyard instead of the church, on account of the number of persons that were not able to gain admittance. Dr. Molesworth, the Rev. W. J. Farrington (incumbent of St. James's), the incumbent of St. Mary's, the Rev. I. Gaitskill (of Whitworth), the two curates, the two churchwardens, Mr. Fielden, Mr. W. W. Barton, and Mr. John Bright took their places upon two tombstones nearly close together, within a yard of the wall which separates the graveyard from the vicar's garden, and lying between the garden door and the churchyard gate which leads into Church Stile: Dr. Molesworth and his friends stood on James Taylor's tombstone on the right; Mr. John Bright and his supporters stood on the tombstone on the left, over the remains of Robert Marriott. The sight of about 4,000 people assembled around these tombstones, some calm and resolute, others contemptuous, was indicative of a coming storm, and it remained with those present to decide whether or not a peaceful solution should be come to.

"This way!

The wind is prosperous, do but shift your sail,
Here's a fair western breeze, and there the south
Heavy with rain: this spreads a peaceful calm
Over the bosom of the deep, and that
Works up the billows to a foam. This way!
Make towards the land! Don't you see
How black the clouds are yonder, how the shower
Hangs ready to burst over you, while here
Prevails eternal sunshine and fair weather."

After Dr. Molesworth had explained the object of the

meeting, Mr. Abraham Brierley, the vicar's warden, read an estimate of the expenses for the year, which made a total of £447 15s. 0d., and in advocating the amount to be raised said that these repairs were absolutely required; for the foundations of the steeple and the church were unsafe and giving way. (Laughter.) Mr. Thomas Holden moved, and Mr. Charles Butterworth seconded, the motion—"That a Church Rate of a halfpenny in the pound be made to cover the expenses."

Mr. John Bright, who was received with cheers, then said:—

"In addressing myself to this immense gathering I am under the influence of feelings of a widely different character. I feel shame that any of my townsmen should have so far disregarded common decency as again to have called the rate-payers of this large and populous parish together after the decision to which they so lately came, and I feel a consolation in contemplating this immense assemblage from the evidence it affords that the subject of Church Rates and of Church oppression generally excites a lively interest amongst you. I proceed to the question before us, and first I refer to the opinion which the Vicar of this parish has promulgated as to the law of the case, or rather as to the *intention* of the law. He owns that the law does not and cannot compel you to make a rate, but asserts that the *intention* of the law is that you shall make a rate; and that, therefore, unless you agree to this exaction for the enriching of the Church of which he is a dignitary, you are guilty of an evasion of the law and of an abandonment of your duty as Christians. Now as to the *intention* of the law I know nothing; all we have to do is to obey the law, and that law is acknowledged not to exist. It is hardly possible that the Vicar can have any very accurate information as to the *intention* of those by whom the practice of levying Church Rates was commenced, and certainly the parishioners are not and cannot be bound by this interpretation of a deeply-interested person. It is probable, when the practice first commenced, that all the parishioners could assemble in the parish church, and that all agreed with the principle and practice; therefore to them there could be no injustice in levying a fair rate for its repair and maintenance. But now things are greatly changed, the population of the parish could not pack themselves in twenty churches like the one before you, and more than one-half of the parishioners are Dissenters. A law now to compel rates from all to support the church of *one* sect only could not be carried, and the House of Commons has more than once decided that Church Rates shall be abolished, and a very just and excellent method of abolishing would have been carried but for the interested and selfish opposition of the clergy and Tories. It is enough for us now that we are not transgressing any law—even if the law did exist it would not make Church Rates just, and the man who expects us to submit to what is manifestly neither lawful nor just ought to have lived three or four hundred years ago. Lord Denman and four other judges have decided unanimously that the power to make a Church Rate exists only with the parishioners, and we know too well to what purposes the wealth of the Church is devoted, voluntarily to tax ourselves for her further aggrandisement. But as to the *intention* of the law I will put a case for the consideration of this meeting, and particularly for the refreshment of the Vicar. Once on a time it was ordered by law that whenever a clergyman came into possession of a living he was to pay over the first year's income to a fund for extending the usefulness of the Church. At that time the Vicarage of Rochdale was worth under £100 per year, and the first fruits were paid on that amount. Now was it not the *intention* of the law that in all future time the first year's income should be devoted to the purpose I have just mentioned? Certainly it was. But what does the Vicar and the rest of his brethren in the Church? Has he paid, or does he intend to pay, his first year's income, or will he content himself by paying under £100 to that useful fund? How does he satisfy his conscience that he is obeying the *intention* of the law? (Loud cheers.) I will now direct your attention to the state of the rate question in this parish. For many years you are aware that large sums were annually raised by the wardens, which sums were generally spent in feasting and drinking, to the great scandal of the parties concerned. This amount has been gradually lessened, and in 1834 the attempt to obtain a rate was defeated

by a considerable majority. Did the wardens submit to that decision? No! they proceeded to levy a rate, and dragged six of the inhabitants of this town into the Ecclesiastical Court, and threw upon them an expense of nearly £400. The wardens were defeated in the Church courts, but during the contest they continued to distrain and to oppress the ratepayers. They entered the house of an inhabitant of Spotland, poor James Brearley, who was then on his death-bed. The *illegal* claim upon the poor weaver was *fourpence*; they seized a looking-glass, but this would not cover the costs, and their ruthless hands then seized his family Bible, and sold it for an illegal rate, and a fortnight ago, during the poll in the vestry, the widow of that man came and tendered her vote against the rate. I pointed her out as she came to the polling tables to those who stood around, and said, 'That is the woman from whose husband you took a Bible for an illegal claim of fourpence when he was on his death-bed.' A young man, the son of a clergyman, but not of this parish, stood by and heard this. He replied, 'Yes, and I would have sold his bed from under him!' That young man is now present! I will not further expose him, but he knows it, and if he dare he may come forward and deny it. (Cries of 'Shame'). Since the year 1834 much dissension has existed on this question, and the wardens' have never succeeded in collecting a rate. In Todmorden it never can be collected, and every contest makes fresh converts to the system of refusing to pay under any circumstances. A fortnight ago the grasping Church party suffered another defeat, in spite of the means they used to ensure a triumph—means such as any honest man would blush to be suspected of. I allude chiefly to the compulsion exercised on workmen by their employers, which I declare to be an unjust and wicked interference with their rights. I assert before this immense assemblage that I never have used any compulsory measures with anyone employed in our works, and I should not dare to lift my head amongst honest men if I were capable of such acts of gross wrong and oppression. But I know of many cases where men have been forced to vote against their consciences from fear of losing their employment. I heard a woollen manufacturer declare during this week that he would compel all his men to vote for the rate, and he would immediately discharge anyone who refused to vote for it. Now, what language can I use to express my indignation at conduct such as this? You have the form of man, you may have the faculties of man, you may claim the right which your Creator has conferred upon you—but if you are thus coerced, if your judgment and your conscience are thus violated, if your own and your neighbour's interests are struck at and wounded through the very privileges which the law has guaranteed you for their defence,—then you are no longer men, you may crouch and confess yourselves slaves (cheers). The perpetrators of these outrages on the rights of the least powerful of the people are sunk to the lowest depth of degradation, and their conduct tends inevitably to demoralize the working classes, and every man guilty of it should be treated with the scorn and reprobation he so richly merits." (Some one called out "Name him," when Mr. Bright said if any of his own friends would demand his name he would give it, but no friend made the demand, and the speaker proceeded.) "My fellow-parishioners, I grieve that you should be again called from your homes and your occupations to express your opinion upon the subject of Church Rates. I know there are many here for whom and for whose families a hard day's labour will but scantily supply a day's food, and yet at the bidding of the zealots of the State Church you are compelled either to sacrifice your time, and consequently your means, or be trampled on and robbed under pretence of serving the cause of religion. The unholy attempt has failed, and I trust it will for ever fail. I will give you a few reasons why you ought not to grant this rate. The income of the Vicarage was returned in 1831 at £1,730 per annum; add to this the vicar's house and grounds, and the renewals of leases, and the letting of more plots of land, and the present income is much more than that. Who gets the fees for christenings, marriages, and funerals? And why, I ask, are any fees paid for these? The Popish Council of Trent, and the State Assembly held at Orleans in 1651, declared that the fees for the sacraments were simony and a scandal to the Church, and yet Protestant clergymen unblushingly charge for administering the sacraments of their Church! These are the men who rail at the failings of Catholics, and who, nevertheless, almost daily practise the very enormities which were denounced as simony, or the crime of trading in Church livings, by the most popish of councils! If they believe that virtue exists in the sacrament of baptism, are they not, in charging fees for its administering, like Simon Magus, who thought that the gift of God might be purchased with money? The minister is paid once for all, and then he comes again for payment for several parts of his duties, just as a servant has his wages and then begs for perquisites! The Vicar has published a

handbill, a copy of which I hold in my hand; he quotes Scripture in favour of a rate, and a greater piece of hardihood cannot be imagined: 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' leaving out the latter part of the sentence. I will give you my opinion of the applicability of this passage in a quotation from our excellent friend, the people's poet, Ebenezer Elliott. He says:—

'When palaced paupers, sneering, beard the town,
They preach the Church Tax in a text like this—
No text more plain:—'To Cæsar give his own!'
Ah, serviles, knavishly the mark they miss,
And give to Cæsar *ours*—not *theirs* nor *his*!

(Loud cheers.) I hold that to quote Scripture in defence of Church Rates is the very height of rashness. The New Testament teems with passages inculcating peace, brotherly love, mutual forbearance, charity, disregard of filthy lucre, and devotedness to the welfare of our fellow-men. In the exaction of Church Rates, in the seizure of the goods of the members of his flock, in the imprisonment of them that refuse to pay, in the harassing process of law and injustice in the Church courts, in the stirrings up of strife and bitterness among the parishioners, in all this a clergyman violates the precepts he is paid to preach, and affords a mournful proof of the infirmity or wickedness of human nature. I believe that in these contests for the iniquitous exactions of the Church, more mischief will be done and more strife engendered than will be atoned or compensated for by all the preachings of the clergy of this parish during the rest of their lives. Fellow-townsmen, I look on that old building, that venerable building, for its antiquity gives it a venerable air, with a feeling of pain. I behold it as a witness of ages gone by, as one of the numberless monuments of the piety or zeal of our ancestors, as a connecting link between this and former ages. I could look on it with a feeling of affection, did I not know that it forms the centre of that source of discord with which our neighbourhood has for years been afflicted, and did it not seem the genial bed wherein strife and bitter jarings were perpetually produced to spread their baneful influence over this densely-peopled parish! I would that that venerable fabric were the representative of a really reformed church—of a church separated from the foul connection with the State—of a church depending upon her own resources, upon the zeal of her people, upon the truthfulness of her principles, and upon the blessings of her Spiritual head! Then would the Church be really free from her old vices, then would she run a career of brighter and still brightening glory; then would she unite heart and hand with her sister churches in this kingdom in the great and glorious work of evangelizing the people of this great empire, and of every clime throughout the world! My friends, the time is coming when a State church will be unknown in England, and it rests with you to accelerate or retard that happy consummation. I call upon you to gird yourselves for the contest which is impending, for the hour of conflict is approaching when the people of England will be arbiters of their own fate; when they will have to choose between civil and religious liberty or the iron hoof, the mental thralldom of a hireling State priesthood! Men of Rochdale, do your duty! You know what becomes you! Maintain the great principles you profess to hold dear, unite with me in the firm resolve that under no possible circumstances will you ever pay a Church Rate; and though the fate of Thorogood may await you, prove that good and holy principles can nerve the heart, and ultimately our cause, your cause, the world's cause, shall triumph gloriously. I now move as an amendment, 'That no Church Rate be granted before the 30th day of July, 1841, and that this meeting stand adjourned to that day.'" (Great cheering.)

Mr. James Fielden seconded the amendment, which was carried by a large majority. The Church party then demanded a poll, and it was decided to commence on the following Tuesday, and remain open till the Saturday; that each day it should open at twelve o'clock and close at five in the evening. The meeting was over about four o'clock, and each party began to make every arrangement for the coming struggle. It was arranged that the polling place should be the National School,

Redeross Street, and booths should be there for all the townships, and presiding officers were appointed to each booth by the Vicar, and in each booth the anti-rate party appointed a "watcher," John Bright being appointed to the Wardleworth booth, and Mr. Barton to "watch" the vicar.

"During the time which elapsed from the day of the meeting to the opening of the poll," wrote Mr. Bright a few days after, "extraordinary exertions were made by the Vicar and his party, to bring up all the votes they could command; there is probably not a place in this extensive parish, however remote or inconsiderable, which was not visited by these harbingers of the approaching 'triumph' of the State Church, and the Vicar himself, with an alacrity worthy of a nobler cause, was seen zealously labouring in the inglorious work of prevailing upon one portion of his 'law-appointed' flock, to do their utmost to fix an exasperating and detested tax upon their neighbours and fellow-parishioners. It is well known that these canvassers on entering the houses of working men, where some hesitation was manifested as to supporting the rate, put the question, 'For whom do you work?' or, if the wife only was at home, 'Where does your husband,' or, 'Where do your children work?' by this means endeavouring to obtain information as to the most effectual method of compelling them to vote; when coaxing was to be tried, the voters were told that if they would vote for the rate their names should be entered in a book, and the collectors should be told not to call upon them for payment!! These attempts to coerce or to cajole the ratepayers were common, and known to thousands, and they are mentioned here as evidence of the spirit in which the contest was begun; how it has been carried on will soon be explained."

On the first day, at twelve o'clock, there came into the town from Todmorden, headed by two bands of music, thirty-three carts and one waggon, which were crowded with women and men voters, who carried banners with the following mottoes; "John Thorogood," "No Church Rate," "Civil and Religious Liberty," "No Bread Tax," and "Church Intolerance."

At the close of the first day's poll, the supporters of the rate found themselves in a minority of 640. This stimulated them to redouble their exertions to recover lost ground, and the walls of the town were covered by each party with acrimonious attacks on its opponent. It was said that some employers of labour who were in favour of the rate discharged many of their workmen because they had voted against the rate. On Wednesday morning, chaises, carts, waggons, and carriages of all sorts were

set in motion to convey voters to the poll, and drink and eatables could be got at certain public-houses free of charge. The anti-rate party accused their opponents of having bribed persons who had not paid their rates by paying them on their behalf after voting favourably. Dr. Molesworth prolonged the poll from five till six, which was objected to by those who were against the rate, and it was contended that by this act the proceedings were rendered illegal. The numbers at the close of the second day were, 3026 for the rate, and 2911 against it. This apparent victory made the Church party very jubilant, and they paraded the streets with bands of music, evidently thinking that their tactics had been successful. On Thursday, however, it soon became evident that the poll was running differently from that of the preceding day, and at the close it was found that they had lost 60 votes on the day's poll, leaving a majority of 55 only. On Friday the poll opened favourably to the anti-rate party. The excitement was so great that nearly all the manufactories and foundries in the town were closed, as it was found impossible to keep the workpeople at their employment, so intense was the interest which they took in this important struggle. Mr. James Fielden felt so much concern in the matter that he had about thirty waggons employed in conveying voters from Todmorden, and the procession of these waggons, crowded with people, was an imposing sight as they rolled along the streets amidst the applause of assembled thousands. Between one and two the booths were crowded, and the anti-rate party complained that the wardens, and those assisting to take the poll, were throwing every obstacle in the way of intending voters against the rate; that at the Wardleworth booth, there being at one time none but anti-rate voters present, the warden who presided began to delay the voters by asking all kinds of questions, such as "How old are you?" "What is the age of your eldest child?" &c. Mr. John Bright protested against this mode of proceeding as disgraceful, and Dr. Molesworth was appealed to, but it was not altered.

At the close of the poll on Friday evening it was found that the numbers stood 5,216 for the rate, and 5,212 against it, leaving only a majority of four in favour of the rate. On Saturday, the last day, the excitement surpassed anything that had ever taken place at the borough elections. Votes were on sale to the highest bidder, and bargains were regularly going on both in the streets and in the National School in Redcross Street, and it was said that many who had their rates paid by the Church party, some to the amount of 20s. and 30s., afterwards went over to the anti-rate party, and voted for them for

the trifling sum of 2s. or 3s. Many who had asked too much for a vote lost the opportunity of realising anything for it. By three or four o'clock in the afternoon, the number of persons assembled in front of the National School was immense, and continued to increase until the close of the poll. One carriage bringing some "blues" was seized by the crowd, and carried away with the voters in it. A few fights took place, and the combatants were carried away with bruised heads, but not seriously hurt. Mr. Chadwick, assistant-overseer for Wuerdle and Wardle, was taxed with having given false certificates that the rates were paid; but he replied that he would be responsible for the payment. About a quarter past five, companies of the 79th Highlanders, stationed in the barracks in Toad Lane, headed by Mr. C. Royds, appeared with fixed bayonets in front of the National School, and occupied the space where the crowd had been standing. The people were astonished, and for a few seconds there was silence, then an under murmur, and a collecting of stones began. The Riot Act was read, and the soldiers were ordered to load.

Mr. John Bright, who stood at the front window, seeing there was every appearance of a rupture between the crowd and the military, essayed to speak through the window, to dissuade any violence, but he could not be heard. He then directed Mr. Edward Taylor to make his way out of the schoolroom and induce the people not to throw stones at the soldiers, as if they did lives would be sacrificed. When the crowd were in the act of listening to Mr. Taylor's advice, Mr. Chadwick came up and ordered the soldiers to return to the barracks, saying there was no reason for their presence, and they obeyed. It was said that Mr. C. Royds had ordered out the soldiers. Dr. Molesworth, at five o'clock, declared he should extend the polling an hour longer. Mr. Barton protested against this as illegal, since the whole parish had been informed by placards, published by the Vicar himself, that the poll would finally close at five o'clock on Saturday night. Some time after, Dr. Molesworth was informed that the several overseers of Spotland, Wardleworth, and Castle-ton had left their offices at five o'clock, under the impression that the poll was then closed; that consequently in those townships the ratepayers were unable to obtain voting tickets, that certificates could be got from three townships only, whose overseers were in the National School, and that the whole proceedings would be rendered illegal. The Vicar, upon learning this, ordered the doors to be closed, asking those present who had not yet voted to do so. Mr. J. Bright, with a large placard in

his hand, called attention to its contents, which stated the hours at which the poll was to commence and terminate, and he protested against the action of the Vicar in prolonging the poll. He said he had another observation to make before the result of the poll was made known by the Vicar. He objected to the votes recorded by persons in Wuerdle and Wardle, Blatchinworth and Calderbrook, and Butterworth, who had not paid their rates, but who had simply received certificates or other helps from the overseers of those townships. That afternoon some hundreds had voted who had never paid one penny of their rates, and it was contrary to the spirit of the law to give certificates of rates being paid, when in fact only some persons had *promised* to pay them. Dr. Molesworth read a list showing the final result of the poll as follows:—In favour of the rate, 6,694; against, 6,581. Majority in favour of the rate, 113. The anti-rate party disputed the correctness of this return, and claimed that they had a majority of seven. Mr. Royds, with the police, conducted Dr. Molesworth home, amid the hisses, hooting, and cheering of the crowds. “Red” and “blue” bands played through the streets during the evening, in celebration of the victory which each party claimed to have won. On the following Monday night a large meeting was held at the “Roebuck,” and a subscription set on foot to defend any person who should be prosecuted for non-payment of the rate.

On the following Wednesday evening a public meeting was held in Mr. Petrie’s new foundry, and although the size of the building was sixty-six yards in length and seventeen yards broad, it was crowded. Mr. John Howard, chief constable, was in the chair. The Rev. David Hewitt moved the first resolution, censuring Dr. Molesworth and the wardens for again agitating the parish for a Church Rate, which had been refused a few days before. The Rev. John Kershaw seconded the motion. Mr. Barton moved the next resolution, charging the Vicar with partiality and injustice in his decisions as chairman, and as an instance mentioned the case of a boy, twelve or fourteen years of age, named Healey, who was brought up and allowed to vote as partner in a cotton concern at Smallbridge, although his vote was strongly objected to. Mr. Whitworth seconded the motion. Mr. John Bright next moved a resolution to the effect that the present Church Rate was illegal, and that it was the duty of the opponents of the rate to use every legal means to resist it. Mr. Bright made a long and eloquent speech, which was listened to with the greatest attention. He

gave a striking picture of the injury done to the morals of the people by the drunkenness, bribery, and intimidation which he said had been resorted to by persons who favoured the rate, and that the struggle had been the means of creating envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness amongst the peaceable parishioners, by fomenting family broils, setting brother against brother, and father against son. What would a savage think of the religion of the English people if he had seen one of its ministers on the previous Saturday night conducted through the streets by a civil magistrate and the police, amidst the shouts and yells, the hissing and hooting of the insulted people? The very man that should have been the minister of peace, and that should have inculcated good-will towards men, embroiled this extensive parish in almost civil war. There was one thing he thought it was his duty to tell them; namely, that one of their townsmen had written to the directors of the Manchester and Leeds Railway, expressing his astonishment that some of the workmen on the line had been permitted to vote against the rate. He would name the man: he was no other than Mr. John Roby, calumniator of the Queen. He informed the meeting that about three hundred navvies, who were employed at the Summit tunnel, voted for the rate, and between twelve and twenty railway *employés* who worked near the Rochdale station had voted against it. The former were strangers, and had been placed upon the rate books for some few dozen sod huts; the latter were occupiers of houses in or near the borough. These resolutions were all carried, and a determined spirit not to pay the rate prevailed.

Dr. Molesworth issued an address, and Mr. Bright thus commented upon it:—

“The Address next alludes to the *religious* Dissenters who, ‘not tempted by the desire of *pocketing*, under the plea of *conscience*, what the law has appropriated to another,’ voted for the rate. Aye, ‘there’s the rub;’ when Tetzel was selling indulgences, he closed his sermons with ‘Bring money! bring money! as soon as the sound of coin is heard in that chest, the soul now suffering in Purgatory is wafted to Heaven!’ The same trick is tried now, ‘Vote for the rate, enrich the Church, and you will be *religious* Dissenters!’ The man who could write about ‘pocketing under the plea of conscience, &c.,’ is truly in small danger of being troubled with scruples, and when it is recollected that he is absorbing something like £2,000 per annum of national property for the performance of duties which the curates have undertaken for years for little more than one-tenth of the sum, it does appear somewhat ‘indiscreet,’ as one of his brother clergymen would say, to speak of ‘pocketing,’ and to sneer at the ‘plea of conscience.’ It has been said that

‘They laugh at scars who never felt a wound,’

and may it not be said with equal force,

‘They sneer at conscience who disown its law.’

The elegant writer of the Address speaks of ‘*mistaken* Dissenters, with Socialists, Chartists, Jacobins, infidels and Atheists, as opposed to his endeavours to uphold law

and religion.' Why are the Socinians omitted in this list? Did he recollect that some of them voted for the rate? Is the support of Church Rates a virtue, which, like charity, 'covereth a multitude of sins?' But how stands the Church with respect to the spread of infidelity? Let Churchmen and Bishops answer. Bishop Lavington, speaking of the 'moral preaching' in the Church, says:—'We have long been attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what success? *None at all.* On the contrary, we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity.' An Under-Secretary of State, and a friend of the Church, in 'Observations on the Liturgy,' speaking of the Athanasian Creed, says:—'I really believe that Creed has made more Deists than all the writings of all the opposers of Christianity, since it was first unfortunately adopted in our Liturgy.' Bishop Warton, the only bishop who opposed the French war, and who for his honesty received no promotion, speaks thus of the Church:—'A motley monster of bigotry and superstition, a scarecrow of shreds and patches, dressed up of old by philosophers and Popes, to amuse the speculative and to affright the ignorant; *now,*' says the Bishop, 'a butt of scorn, against which every unfledged witling of the age essays his wanton efforts, and before he has learned his catechism is fixed an *infidel for life!*' Whence come the Infidels, and Atheists, and Socialists? Wilberforce says:—'Improving in every other branch of knowledge, we have become less and less acquainted with Christianity.' And the *Quarterly Review*, in 1816, said:—'Two-thirds of the lower order of people in London are as errant and unconverted Pagans as if they had existed in the wildest parts of Africa, and the case is the same in Manchester, Leeds, Bristol, Sheffield, and all the large towns; the greatest part of the manufacturing populace, of the miners and colliers, are in the same condition; and if they are not universally so, it is more owing to the zeal of the Methodists than to any other cause.' What have the clergy been doing? Have they been absorbing the immense national funds entrusted to their care, whilst their duties have been in great part neglected? Or have they allowed rates to be uncollected, and the impost of tithes to be forgotten? No, the fleece has had its full share of attention, whatever has become of the flock.

"The Vicar endeavours to draw a parallel between his case and that of the prophet Elijah! Does he not perceive the ludicrous error into which he has fallen? Elijah was a reformer, he opposed the state priesthood of his day, and dared to disobey the commands of Ahab, who, with the priests of Baal, charged him with 'troubling Israel.'

"He (the Vicar) says further:—'the principal performer in that farce of false accusation is known in Rochdale, and so am I. Let the people believe him whose character they think best entitles him to credit.' In answer to this, it may be enough to state that the individual (W. W. Barton) to whom he evidently alludes is 'known in Rochdale,' that he has lived in Rochdale twenty-six years, that he has maintained himself and his family by honest industry, that during that time he has walked 6,000 miles to preach the gospel to the poor, and that he has, doubtless, been in more sick chambers in that period than the whole *corps* of clergymen connected with the parish church. This is not stated as a boast, and I may have said more than will be agreeable to the individual in question, but I would show that great zeal may exist without the inducement of a great income."

On the 18th of January, 1841, nine gentlemen:—John Petrie, ironfounder and engineer, Edward Taylor, druggist, Robert Heape, wholesale grocer, Thomas Southworth, draper, Joseph Butterworth, gentleman, Edward Briggs, one of the Society of Friends, Wm. Driver, gardener, and John Whitaker and James Gibson, dyers, were summoned for refusing to pay the Church Rate. The charges were heard at the Flying Horse, in Packer Street, before Clement Royds (chairman), John Fenton, Wm. Chadwick, Henry Kelsall, and other magistrates. The court-room and streets were crowded by partisans of both sides. The majority of the magistrates, considering that the summonses were incorrectly drawn, invalidated the claim,

and dismissed them. Although further proceedings were taken the rate was never collected. The Vicar and his friends in time grew tired of the vigorous opposition that met them on every hand, and the Church Rates ultimately became things of the past.

The feeling between the two sects has since then undergone considerable change, for we find in the month of June, 1883, the Vicar of Rochdale, the Rev. Canon Maclure, inviting any minister of the United Methodist Free Church coming to the annual Conference of that body, to become a guest at the Vicarage during his stay. Further we witnessed the Vicar taking part in the funeral service, at the Dissenters' Chapel at the Rochdale Cemetery, over the remains of the late Mayor of the town, who was a Dissenter, and the Rev. Canon W. N. Molesworth, the son of the late Vicar, pronouncing the benediction at the graveside. .

CHAPTER X.

AS A LITERARY CHARACTER.

The Commencement of Church and Dissenting Magazines—Conflict between Them—The Clergy and the Corn Laws—Vicars contrasted—A Munificent Gift to the League Funds—The End of the Magazines—On Grammar—Kind Deeds.

MR. BRIGHT is next seen as a literary character. In 1842 the Rev. Dr. Molesworth and the Rev. W. N. Molesworth, published a magazine entitled "Common Sense, or Everybody's Magazine"—with the motto, "Fine sense and exalted sense are not half so useful as common sense"—in support of the Established Church, and advocating the continuance of Church Rates. Mr. Edward Taylor and Mr. John Coates (surgeon) issued a prospectus announcing the appearance of another monthly magazine, in favour of the separation of Church and State and voluntarism in religion, to which they gave the significant title of "The Vicar's Lantern," with the motto "*Alere Flammam*" beneath a very neat illustration of a human hand exhibiting a burning lamp, close to the handle of which a grave-looking owl appears to be serenely contemplating the brilliant light of the lamp. Mr. John Bright, Mr. Oliver Ormerod, and Mr. Thomas Booth joined the promoters of this magazine, and it was arranged that Mr. E. Taylor should attend to the editorial department, and that the other four gentlemen should contribute the articles. Once a month they met at the Old Market Place (Mr. Taylor's residence) to arrange the subjects each should undertake, and Mr. Bright's productions usually comprised the first article of each number. As it will no doubt be interesting to give a few extracts from Mr. Bright's papers, we proceed to do so.

The first article, as well as four others, bear the title of "Common Sense," and is a review of the articles that appeared in the magazine brought out by Dr. Molesworth and his friends. "When corn is high in price," so wrote Mr. Bright, "tithes are increased in amount, and when corn is cheap tithes suffer considerable diminution, and thus the clergy of the Act of Parliament Church feed more luxuriously in proportion as their flocks are suffering from scarcity. . . . The vine brought out of Egypt had assuredly no reference to the pampered perse-

ctor of our country. The only resemblance which that State Church bears to a vine is that she cannot flourish of herself, but must climb around and clasp the 'elm of worldly strength and felicity,' and of this feature surely the inspired bard intended no approval. The general question of the Corn Law is not to be interfered with. Of course not. To withhold a few pence of an illegal Church Rate is an offence which cries to heaven and demands a pamphlet, but to withhold bread from millions of honest men and their families is a general question of no immediate importance, and not to be interfered with!" Speaking of one of the articles in the Vicar's publication, Mr. Bright writes, "In this article there is an allusion to the Church of Rome, which we cannot but think somewhat uncivil when we consider how much of the system lauded to the skies in 'Common Sense' is borrowed from that venerable, if darkened, institution. Much of that which is the boast of the State Church comes second-hand from Rome, and we are strongly of opinion that if old Adam of Spotland had known that his bequest would at some future day be in the possession of a man who would be ungrateful enough to sneer at the Church of his affections, he would have directed his property into a very different channel." "'Mr. Robert Bath was vicar many years.' He 'resigned his living rather than act contrary to the dictates of his conscience.' We are not greatly surprised that such men as Robert Bath should be rarely found in the State Church. The facts before us are of a mournful character. For such men as he to be in the Establishment, where the soul is tied down by Acts of Parliament, would be unnatural and almost impossible. An Act of Uniformity, made by weak and erring mortals to bind the human mind for ever, is a monstrous thing. Are mankind to stand still? Are all things to change and to advance, and man alone to rest content with ignorance and superstition and imperfection? Is a parchment church, whilst it drains the purse, to perpetuate error and to shun as a pestilence the discovery of truth? Is custom to be venerated because it is old, or ought we not rather to affirm with Cyprian that custom without truth is but agedness of error? The call of truth is often a still small voice—the temptation of wealth, and ease, and station, speak loudly to the frailty of our nature, but when, to use the words of Bacon, 'men by indignities come to dignities,' better far were it to wander poor and friendless, an outcast on the world, like Robert Bath, the Puritan vicar of Rochdale, than to live in the thralldom of a church hedged in by the clauses of an Act of Parliament, even though delusion may

have become so dense that the poor victim hugs his fetters, and dances with violent gesticulation even in his chains." "When that obstinate, if not then insane monarch, George III., was carrying fire and sword into the American colonies, in the vain endeavour to compel them to submit to his arbitrary will, the ministry of that day was supported by the whole bench of bishops, with only one honourable exception. When the aristocracy of Britain were draining the country which has so long been afflicted by the pressure of their iron heel, for the purpose of exterminating the germs of liberty in continental Europe, the whole bench of bishops, with only one honourable exception, were their firm allies, and their votes were ever ready in behalf of the war which was desolating the fairest portions of the civilised world.

'When earth wept blood that wolves might lap and swill,
And pleading mercy was a trampled worm,
Basely they pander'd to the slayer's will,
And still their spells they mutter in the storm,
Retarding long the march of slow reform.'

When the question of the abolition of that infamous and accursed traffic in human flesh, the African slave trade, was proposed, it met with great opposition from the bench of bishops. Their conduct on one occasion drew from Lord Eldon the cutting sarcasm that 'the slave trade could not be opposed to Christianity and the precepts of the Gospel, seeing that it was uniformly supported by the right reverend prelates.' 'But the measure of the political iniquities of this band of spiritual lords is not yet filled up, nor will it be until the day when the voice of an awakened and indignant people shall call them from the high places they have scaled, and with stern rebuke assign them a position more in accordance with their demerits. That the bishops and the hosts of the clergymen who are sighing for Episcopal dignities should hate and oppose the Anti-Corn-Law League will not be matter of surprise to those who have studied the history of priestcraft. The Anti-Corn-Law League is the foe of aristocratic injustice, and the State Church is the creature and tool of the aristocracy.'

"We doubt not that the munificent contribution made in this town to the 'Great League Fund' has had an effect the reverse of soothing upon the nerves of the bread-taxing Vicar of Rochdale. When men refuse at all hazards to pay Church Rates, and yet cheerfully contribute upwards of £2,000 to an Anti-Corn-Law League, it indicates a degree of alienation from the 'Political Church' which must shock the feelings of

every well-paid and comfortable dignitary who nestles within its ample folds. And so it is in Rochdale."

A short time before the publication of "Common Sense" was discontinued, in September, 1843, Mr. Bright, through his attention becoming more absorbed with the objects of the Anti-Corn-Law League, contributed very few articles to the "Vicar's Lantern," and the last number of this publication was issued on the 1st December, 1843, the editor's closing words being:—"We rejoice that amidst the dangers and difficulties that have beset our path we are at length enabled in peaceful triumph to place the extinguisher with our own hand upon the 'Vicar's Lantern.'"

Our readers will perceive from the extracts we have given that the articles written by Mr. Bright manifest much literary ability; and no doubt they contributed considerably to bring about many changes in Church matters as they then existed, and which appeared to the writer to be very objectionable from a Dissenter's point of view.

Mr. Bright, many years ago, in awarding prizes to the successful competitors in the classes connected with the Rochdale Working Men's Educational Institute (an institution which has since collapsed), said he found that this institution gave lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar and geography.

"Well," he added, "I have great respect for all those except grammar. (Laughter.) If there is any lad here who is engaged in learning grammar, I will undertake to say that he will say it is the very driest and most unpleasant study that any person ever put himself to. (Laughter.) When I was at school, which is a long time ago, we learned a grammar written by a gentleman who, I believe, was a member of the religious persuasion to which I belong, and who was a native of the United States of America—Lindley Murray. Lindley Murray's grammar had a great reputation then, and for anything I know has yet; but if it has, I pity the lads that have to learn it as I had to learn it—(laughter)—for as far as I can recollect—and no doubt it is but a cloudy sort of a recollection that I have—there were no end of rules, and no end of examples—rules within rules, and exceptions of all kinds, and I have now a feeling of utter confusion of my mind in endeavouring to understand all the rules of Lindley Murray's grammar. (Laughter.) My opinion is that grammar may be very easily learned without all that, and that it is very difficult for any person who reads well-written books, and understands them, not to acquire a very competent knowledge of grammar, without finding it necessary to learn all the rules in that celebrated but unhappy book." (Laughter.)

Mr. William Logan, of Glasgow, in his book on "The Great Social Evil," gives a glimpse of another trait in Mr. John Bright's character. "In my missionary efforts, not only to reclaim fallen women, but to try and benefit the deserving poor, I found Mr. John Bright (now the Right Hon. M.P. for Birmingham) ever ready to lend, especially with his purse, a helping hand. It may be remarked, in passing, that a few days after my arrival in Rochdale, in 1840, I had a pleasant interview

with Mr. Bright at his counting-house. At that time I was employed by a Congregational Church in the town, so that Mr. Bright's co-operation was all the more disinterested. On that occasion he remarked that I would find plenty of work in the poorer districts of the town; and where I met with cases of real distress he should be glad to supply me with a little money to give temporary relief to really destitute persons. I soon found a number of such cases. As soon as Mr. Bright was satisfied that the case was a deserving one, he at once, in the most unostentatious manner, furnished the means of relief—the name of the generous donor being concealed. At this time Mr. Bright also gave a discretionary power to send any poor boy or girl to an excellent unsectarian school at his expense; and not a few children, whose parents could not or would not pay, were in this way educated. His venerable father was likewise always willing to aid the destitute, and even the erring. He was as fine a specimen as could be met with of the 'Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.' I have still a distinct recollection of being asked by him one morning to call on a family that I heard was not very deserving, and said so. The genial and esteemed Quaker quietly, but impressively, remarked, 'I do not like to be imposed upon, but thou must remember, when visiting the poor, that if a man is not as regular in his habits as he should be, he is not on that account to be allowed to *starve*—much less his wife and helpless innocent children.' He then handed me, as he had often done before, a sum of money to be given prudently to the poor, or to help in sending some poor wanderer home."

An instance of feigned poverty came under Mr. Bright's notice. On a Saturday morning a stranger presented himself at the counting-house of Field-house Mills, and told Mr. John Bright that he had found employment at one of the foundries in Rochdale, and was to begin work on the following Monday, but had nothing for his present support. Mr. Bright, calling one of his warehousemen, gave into his care five shillings, and directed him to accompany the applicant to the foundry named, and if his story were correct he was to give the man the five shillings. They proceeded together four or five hundred yards, when the vagrant inquired where his companion was going. He replied, that he was going to the foundry to make inquiries. The impostor, finding that his plan of deception would not succeed, without delay ran away in an opposite direction, and was soon out of sight. Mr. Bright, seeing his warehouseman return so soon, inquired the reason, and on learning the truth was amused.

Many trifling incidents have occurred which have brought

out Mr. John Bright's sympathy for his fellow-men, of which the following is an instance:—Passing one day through his mills with Mr. Samuel Tweedale, his manager, he noticed that a young woman named Sarah Turner was looking very ill, and desired Mr. Tweedale to inquire if she had proper food. The manager replied that it was not bodily want that she was suffering from, but her mind was ill at ease concerning her brother, who had enlisted, and that she had been for some time accumulating her little savings for the purpose of buying him off; that she had once broken down in health, and was just recovering her strength. The anxious sister's small savings were increased to the desired amount by a generous and unseen hand, whose sympathy took the form of substantial benevolence, and the absent brother returned, to spend his days in peaceful industry, instead of seeking glory's bubble at the cannon's mouth.

CHAPTER XI.

ACTION OF THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE.

Return of the Distress—The Action in the House of Commons—Conferences and Meetings in the Country—Richard Cobden made a Member of Parliament—Hostility in the House to him—The Death of Mrs. Bright—Cobden's Advice—Horace Twiss's Opinion of Cobden—The irrepressible Manchester Fellows—The Cause of the Depression of the Flannel Trade.

DURING the year 1840 there was much to discourage the men who had engaged to oppose the Corn Laws, and who were regarded by their opponents as intruders from Manchester, on a mission to forward their own interests. In spite of the prevailing distress, the bad harvests, and the high price of corn, a host of pamphleteers rushed into print to prove that the repeal of the Corn Laws would benefit the working man by only about the one hundred and fiftieth part of a penny on the price of a quartern loaf, and therefore it was good for the health, morals, education, comfort, and happiness of the labouring classes that there should be a high price of corn and little work, with which to earn the small wages that were to be given away for the dear bread.

From a return compiled by persons who accompanied the enumerators of the population of Rochdale in 1841, with a view to present a record to the House of Commons of the condition of the inhabitants of Rochdale, it appeared that in several families of seven or eight members there were only two beds, the weekly incomes of such families being from 10s. to 13s. In another family of four members there was one bed, and the earnings were 8s. a week. In another there were seven persons with three beds, and the earnings did not exceed 10s. Another of four persons possessed two beds, and earned only 5s. a week. There were also found families of seven persons with two beds living on 5s. a week; of three persons with two beds and 1s. 3d. a week; of five persons with two beds and 6s. a week; two persons with one bed and earnings 1s. 2d. with 2s. parochial relief. In all these cases the household furniture and bedding were scanty, and the inmates poorly clad.

On the 3rd of April, 1840, Mr. Villiers brought a motion into the House of Commons in favour of a committee to consider

the operation of the Corn Law Act, and the result was that 131 were in its favour, and 227 voted for adjourning it *sine die*, so that the amendment was carried by a majority of 86. The following month he again introduced his motion, but it was rejected by a majority of 123. Earl Fitzwilliam, on the 11th of June, 1840, in the House of Lords moved that it be expedient to consider the laws relating to the importation of foreign corn. Only 42 were in favour of the motion, and 142 against it.

On the 14th of April, 1841, Mr. Bright formed one of a deputation from Rochdale at a Conference in the League Rooms, Market Street, Manchester, on the subject of the Corn Laws. In the evening of the same day a meeting was held in the Corn Exchange, presided over by Mr. J. B. Smith, afterwards member for Stockport for many years, and about 2,000 persons were present. Mr. Cobden was one of the speakers. Mr. Bright, in moving a resolution, declared that the Corn Laws were the greatest iniquity on the face of the statute book. He had proofs of this in his own native town, where the Corn Laws were causing a scarcity of food. He had been told that in Stockport out of a street of 100 houses 99 were empty, and he asked what had become of the inhabitants. Some of them had gone to America, some had removed into lower-rented houses, some to the workhouse, and some doubtless to their graves.

Mr. Villiers, in reply to our inquiry as to where he first saw Mr. John Bright, stated:— "I think it was in 1840-1, when I was with Mr. Cobden in Manchester, and he requested me to accompany him to a meeting, as I should then hear a young man, a son of Mr. Jacob Bright, of Rochdale, who would speak on the subject of the repeal of the Corn Laws, and who had lately shown considerable ability in some religious controversy in his own town, and he should like to hear what I thought of him. I remember that upon hearing him I was most favourably impressed with the force and earnestness with which he spoke, and strongly urged upon Mr. Cobden the advantage it would be if his services could be engaged in this cause in which we were then so much interested. Soon after that he was seen and heard (with great success) on the same platform with Mr. Cobden, and afterwards became one of the most prominent speakers in the country against the Corn Laws."

The Budget of 1841 was made the occasion of a great party fight, which lasted eight nights, and which terminated in the defeat of the ministers by a majority of thirty-six votes. In the course of this debate Lord Palmerston showed that he had become completely converted to Free Trade. In reply to a sarcastic

speech from Sir Robert Peel, he said the whole history of parliamentary legislation for a number of years past had been nothing but the destruction of monopolies. "The Test and Corporation Acts, the Protestant Monopoly in Parliament, the Boroughmonger's Monopoly, had successively fallen. The monopolies of corporators and that of the East India Company had also gone down. We were now pursuing monopoly into the last stronghold—were attacking the monopoly of trade." He concluded by telling his opponents that although they might then resist the measures proposed by Government, "yet, if they should come into office, these were the measures which a just regard for the finances and commerce of the country would compel themselves to propose." A few nights later a vote of want of confidence was proposed, and the ministers obtaining a majority of only one, resolved to appeal to the country. The dissolution took place early in June. The contest was fought upon the decisive question of Free Trade, and the verdict of the country was against it.

The Members of the Anti-Corn Law League decided to bring forward Mr. Cobden as a candidate for Stockport, and he was returned on the 30th of June. The result of the general election was a majority of ninety for the Conservative party. Sir Robert Peel became prime minister, and the Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, and Sir James Graham were members of the cabinet. The new Parliament assembled on the 19th of August, and in the royal speech it was called upon to direct its attention to "the revision of the duties affecting the protection of the country; to consider whether some of these duties were not so trifling in amount as to be unproductive to the revenue, while they were vexatious to the commerce; to further examine whether the principle of protection upon which other of those duties were founded was not carried to an extent injurious alike to the income of the State and the interests of the people; and above all, to consider the laws which regulate the trade in corn." The majority of the members of the House of Commons, however, decided that they had not been sent there to take measures for the freedom of commerce, the resuscitating of trade, or the mitigating of the sufferings of millions of people. In fact, the "agricultural interest" boasted of having returned the Parliament; and from what followed in the sessions, it appeared that the boast was founded on facts. When, acting in concert, a determined majority sent forth in the House of Commons shouts of derision and cries of disapprobation, it was no mean chirrup. This was the species of hostility which the new member for Stockport had to encounter when he made his first appearance

in Parliament. The moment he uttered a Free-trade sentiment, the crowded monopolist benches attempted to sink it with a storm of disapprobation. The name of the Anti-Corn-Law League was the signal for laughter loud and long, or else a tirade against that "presumptuous," "audacious," "intermeddling," "factious," and "mischievous" association, which prevented the great body of the people from enjoying scarcity and dearness of food, and protected want of employment.

Mr. Villiers informed the author of this biography, that Mr. Cobden consented to become a member of parliament "after some hesitation which he expressed to me (Mr. Villiers) in a letter asking my advice, and which I gave most distinctly in favour of his doing so, if he could, for it was in the House of Commons where our real opponents were in all their force, and where the fight had really to be carried on."

In the summer months of this year, instead of bright sunshine to mature the wheat and mellow the fruit, dark clouds chased each other across the sky, and torrents of rain drenched the ground. A dark and gloomy winter followed; commerce was depressed, and the labouring classes suffered severely.

"Shoals of artisans
From ill-requited labour turned adrift,
Sought daily bread from public charity."

Mr. Bright's anxieties were increased by forebodings of sorrow in his own home, for the decline of Mrs. Bright's health troubled him, and they removed to Leamington, so that she might be benefited by that more salubrious air, but his suffering became more severe,

"Because too surely in her cheek he saw
The insidious bloom of death; and then her smile
And innocent mirth excited deeper grief."

The stern winter of 1841 was fast approaching, the green of the fields was fading, the forest darkening, and sere leaves falling before their time; a hoarser murmur came from the mountain stream, migratory birds were flocking, and pluming their wings for their long flight to more genial climes, and the last rose of summer "in the Sabbath of the year," had just sprung from the clefts of its hood, bowed its head and broken the stalk, when Mrs. Bright's soul took its flight to the God who gave it, and her earthly frame was buried in the quiet haven of the Rochdale Friends' Meeting House. There is, perhaps, no circumstance so well calculated to awaken the fulness of tender feeling as the death of those to whom the

heart has been long and fondly attached. Not, indeed, in the first flow and bitterness of irrepressible grief, but when time and the memory of former happiness have mellowed anguish into tender regret. Beneath such a loss he was bowed down with sorrow, and the misery of the poor shared the sigh which the calamity of his home extorted. The last night of her life, when attacked by the hæmorrhage which carried her off, she did not forget to thank the doctor for his kindness, nor to request her attendants to see that he should have some coffee; showing the gentle thoughtfulness which marked her character through her too short life.

The sad event and what followed is best described in a speech which Mr. Bright delivered at Rochdale:—

“He best can paint them who shall feel them most.”

“In this beautiful address there is a reference to services which you are kind enough to say I have rendered in conjunction with the illustrious and lamented Mr. Cobden. This reminds me of an incident which had something to do with my after career. In the year 1841 I was at Leamington, and spent several months there. It was near the middle of September there fell upon me one of the heaviest blows that can visit any man. I found myself left there with none living of my house but a motherless child. Mr. Cobden called upon me the day after that event, so terrible to me, and so prostrating. He said, after some conversation, ‘Don’t allow this grief, great as it is, to weigh you down too much; there are at this moment in thousands of homes in this country wives and children who are dying of hunger, of hunger made by the law. (Hear, hear.) If you will come along with me, we will never rest till we have got rid of the Corn Law.’ (Cheers.) We saw the colossal injustice which cast its shadow over every part of the nation, and we thought we saw the true remedy and the relief, and that if we united our efforts, as you know we did, with the efforts of hundreds and thousands of good men in various parts of the country, we should be able to bring that remedy home, and to afford that relief to the starving people of this country. (Hear.) I recollect well, in some of our labours, when I looked forward to the day (we could not see it, but we knew that it was coming) when that injustice would be removed, and that law-made hunger would be ever after prevented. I recollect often that I took to myself something of prophecy from the lines of one of our poets—when that day shall come, I thought:—

‘Then shall misery’s sons and daughters
In their lowly dwellings sing;
Bounteous as the Nile’s dark waters,
Undiscover’d as their spring,
We will scatter o’er the land
Plenty with a secret hand.’”

The call came from a voice which was as potent to him as it was destined to become in the councils of the country; and he arose from his sorrow, and gave himself to labours that blessed mankind, and the name of Cobden and Bright became household words on the lips of the people of England.

Mr. Bright’s sister, Miss Priscilla Bright (now Mrs. McLaren), presided over the quiet little home at “One Ash,” after the death of Mrs. Bright, and gave him every help and sympathy in his work, not only from affection for him, but also from a deep interest in all public questions.

Most speakers, even although they have been in the habit for years of addressing large provincial audiences, feel a degree of nervousness on rising in the House of Commons, especially for the first time. This may be attributed to the natural diffidence in rising before such an august assembly, and the critical character of the audience, their undoubted intelligence, and superiority as speakers. Mr. Cobden, when he delivered his maiden speech in the House, felt nervous and embarrassed, and this was heightened by the consciousness of his being leader of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and consequently regarded with suspicion. The jeering aspect of his opponents was expressive of their contempt, and it was said that his style was only fit to influence audiences in manufacturing districts, and any slight defect in his speeches was pounced upon and held up to derision. Even the details of his business were indecorously discussed, and an attempt made to degrade the position of a manufacturer. The old monopolists asked who he was, and the young ones raising their eye-glasses also inquired, "Who did you say he was?" "Oh, only a Manchester man. He's one of those who belong to the—what do you call it?—to the what's-his-name?—that provincial thing that tried to make a noise at the election about cheap bread. Oh, ah—the Anti-Corn-Law League—I mean. Exactly. I daresay he has some ability, but it is a horrid bore to be pestered with these Manchester fellows. We must get somebody to answer him—what do you think? There's Ferrand, let's get him up. He has a magnificent voice, and anybody will do to silence these Manchester men." So Ferrand, although his opinions were like the plants that grow upon rocks, that stick fast though they have no rooting, was got up, and rewarded with cheers; was the talk of the clubs, and the admired of some assemblies, but they

"Never remember'd the wretched ones
That starved for the want of food."

The Manchester fellows, however, refused to keep silence, and gradually made their way in the House, notwithstanding the determined effort to put them down. "Gratuitous violence in argument betrays a conscious weakness of the cause, and is usually a signal of despair." And the rule applied in this case, and every effort failed to silence Mr. Cobden, and he was propelled forward by these attempts. He made his way not by bullying and vulgarity, but by clear, pungent common sense, and by the force of intellect and exquisite tact. He only spoke when he had something to say, and his remarks were put in the

tersest way at the fittest opportunity. In later years, in referring to this period, Mr. Cobden said :—

“When I went up to Parliament in 1841, it would have been much easier and more pleasant to many minds, and a much more agreeable life, if I had at once fallen into the track, and, instead of instituting an independent resistance to Government when I chose, I had joined the governing class, and become one of their humble servants. But the very first day I went into Parliament, in 1841, when the lines of party were still visible, when there was a great gulf between the two great parties on the two sides of the House—when Sir Robert Peel had his 390 or 400 men, and Lord John Russell his 270 or 280 men—the very first time I got up and spoke as the Member for Stockport, I declared I came there to do something—to repeal the Corn Laws, and I would know neither Whig nor Tory until that work was done.”

Mr. Bright in another speech describes being in the gallery of the House of Commons in 1841 when Mr. Cobden made his first speech.

“I happened to sit,” he stated, “close to a gentleman, not now living—Mr. Horace Twiss—who had once himself been a member of the House, but who was then occupied in the gallery writing the parliamentary summary of the proceedings, which were published morning after morning in the *Times*. Mr. Cobden had a certain reputation when he went into Parliament from the course he had taken before the public in connection with the Corn Law out of doors. There was great interest about his first speech as to the position he would take in the House. Mr. Horace Twiss was a Tory of the old school. He appeared to have the greatest possible horror of anybody who was a manufacturer or a calico printer coming down into the assembly to teach our senators wisdom. As the speech went on I watched his countenance and heard his observations, and when Mr. Cobden sat down he threw it off with a careless gesture and said, ‘Nothing in him; he is only a barker.’ Horace Twiss consoled himself that there was no harm to be done to the established interests, mainly represented in that House by the eloquence or the arguments of the member for Stockport. Well, now, it was not very long before Mr. Cobden found himself having just as much influence in that House as he had had at meetings such as this. I believe there is no reason to doubt the fact that some of Mr. Cobden’s speeches—one, in particular, that I recollect, in connection with the effect of protection on agriculture—had such an effect upon the mind and opinions of Sir Robert Peel, that if I were to point out any one thing that mainly brought Sir Robert Peel to be a Free Trader not long afterwards, I should point to the speech made on that particular night by Mr. Cobden. Well, this ‘barker’ of Horace Twiss became a great power in the House of Commons and a great power in the country. Now, I had the good fortune, after the year 1841, and for five years, and, in fact, for something longer than five years, to be most intimately and closely associated with him in his labour. I can speak of his industry and his sagacity, of the incessant correspondence in which he was engaged, I can speak also of the speeches he delivered. I remember the beautiful and yet homely illustrations with which they were filled. I recollect well how at every meeting he attended I could see the truth, as it were, spreading from his lips and permeating the minds of all those who heard him, till you could see in their countenances and eyes that they had got hold of a new truth that they would keep for ever.”

In these days, as on many occasions since, much palaver was heard in the House of Commons about the time-hallowed institutions and approved wisdom of our ancestors, when attempts were made to remove monuments of their folly. Sir Matthew Hale, that great luminary of law, after having condemned a poor woman to death for witchcraft, took occasion to sneer at the rash innovators who were then advocating a

repeal of that statute; and falling on his knees, thanked God for being enabled to uphold one of the sagest enactments handed down to us by our venerable forefathers. Bacon, who was so far beyond his age in all matters of science, was not less credulous than the weakest of his contemporaries, and published very minute directions for guarding against witches, under which imputation many scores of wretched old women were burnt in the reign of James the First. The worthy Druids, who sacrificed human victims to their idols, were "our illustrious ancestors."

Denunciations have also been hurled in the same House by the supporters of the slave-trade against those who would subvert "the glorious institutions handed down to us," and we have been told of the efficacy of the Sinking Fund, the benefit derived from wars, the danger of Popery, and innumerable other phantasms and delusions which poor posterity will be bound to adopt as gospel, if the seal of time is to be always acknowledged as the signet of truth. The aristocracy at that time regarded manufacturers, the middle class and the working class, as if they were an inferior race of beings. A French author once declared that he would believe in the intentions of nature to create different ranks among mankind, when he saw one class born with a crown upon their heads, like a peacock, and another with a mark of servitude across their shoulders. The aristocracy could not deny that the other portion of humanity bore the image of the Deity, and had "the limbs, the thews, the stature, bulk, the big semblance of a man," with his spirit and intelligence, but it might be said with some semblance of truth that those who were favoured with high birth, rank, and riches are often of puny intellect, as if nature had previously taken their brains and stamina to fill her cornucopia.

Throughout the years 1840 and 1841 Mr. Bright delivered speeches against the Corn Laws in many of the important centres of England, and daily raised himself in the estimation of his auditors as a skilful logician. He went boldly into the agricultural districts, and uttered to them in their own camp truths which, however distasteful, they heard patiently and often with attention. Mr. Charles Villiers, a gentleman of ability, was chosen leader of the Free Trade party in the House of Commons. He was a man of aristocratic family, was eloquent and powerful in argument, but the real leaders in the country were Messrs. Cobden and Bright. All this time Mr. Bright was thoroughly active in the cause, and sanguine as to its ultimate

success. "Hope of a crop makes the husbandman sow his seed; hope of victory makes the soldier fight; and a true hope of glory makes the Christian vigorously pursue glory."

On the 24th of August, 1841, an amendment on the ministerial address, in answer to the Queen's Speech (which recommended a revision of the Corn Laws), was carried in the House of Lords by 168 to 95—majority 72. A similar amendment was carried in the House of Commons on the same evening by a majority of 91. Lord John Russell, on the 6th of February, 1842, moved a resolution against the alteration in the Corn Laws, proposed by Sir Robert Peel, as not being calculated to remove the evils of the former law. This resolution was lost; 226 were in its favour and 349 against it. On the 24th of February, 1842, Mr. Villiers brought in his annual motion for the total repeal of the Corn Laws, but he was again defeated, the majority this time being 213. On the 25th February, 1842, Mr. Christopher moved an amendment for increasing the duties proposed by Sir Robert Peel's new Corn Law Bill, but the amendment was rejected, and the majority numbered 203.

At a meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law delegates on the 17th of November, 1841, in Manchester, amongst other resolutions unanimously adopted, there was one recommending that distinct meetings of deputies from the towns engaged in the manufacture of the various staple products, and from other districts conveniently situated for acting together, should be called, and it was further suggested that there should be prepared for publication at such meetings statements of facts bearing upon the state of the population of the respective districts. This great and interesting meeting, perhaps one of the most important ever held in the country concerning the statistics of manufacturing depression in this large and populous district, was held in the Corn Exchange, Manchester, on Thursday morning, December 16th, 1841. Mr. Robert Hyde Greg occupied the chair. Mr. John Bright, in presenting an account of the state of things in Rochdale, observed that although the deputies had come together to consider the effect produced on the cotton trade by the Corn Laws, still he did not think there was any impropriety in laying some facts connected with the flannel trade before the meeting. They were all bearing on the same point; and therefore without any further preface he would read to the meeting a statement which had been drawn up at the recommendation of a committee in Rochdale, who had paid especial attention to the subject.

"Many intelligent manufacturers suppose that, previous to the passing of the American tariff, nearly one-third, or at least one-fourth, of the flannel made in Rochdale was exported to the United States. The American tariff passed in May, 1828, by 105 to 94 in the House of Representatives, and by 26 to 21 in the Senate. It is remarkable that 28 of the New England representatives voted against it, and only 15 for it; and, as the representatives of the southern states opposed it, it was carried by the representatives of the middle or manufacturing states and the western or agricultural states. Mr. Randolph said 'That if the bill had its true name it should be called a bill to rob and plunder one-half of the Union for the benefit of the other half.' Mr. Drayton moved to amend the title as follows:—Strike out all after 'an Act,' and insert 'to increase the duties on certain imports for the purpose of increasing the profits of certain manufacturers.' When the bill passed, the New York papers said, 'The expression of public opinion is very bitter against this measure, and the shipowners will have occasion to lament it more than any other part of the mercantile community.' The consequences of this tariff upon the flannel trade of Rochdale were most disastrous. It at one blow annihilated the American trade in that description of goods, and since 1828 the export of flannels to the United States has been reduced to an amount quite inconsiderable in comparison with that which took place previously.

"The inevitable effect of this diminished demand was scarcity of employment and a fall of wages. Wages had remained pretty stationary from 1820 to 1828; but in 1829 they fell from 16 to 20 per cent., and employment was scarce. No new market was opened to take off the goods usually made for America; weavers were too numerous for the work to be done; wages continued to fall; and in 1831 wages were 40 per cent. below the rates paid in 1828. Great numbers of sober, industrious, and valuable operatives emigrated to the very country whose food we refused to take in payment for flannels, and whose people were partly compelled to make flannels for themselves. These operatives would have remained in their own country to add to its population, its strength, and its prosperity, but for the suicidal policy of the landlord government of England. Distress made fearful strides amongst those who remained at home, and, had it not been that the cotton trade extended into the town about this period, taking up many hands from the woollen trade, the sufferings of the operatives must have been greatly aggravated. To such a state was the flannel trade reduced that many looms were broken up, being worthless as looms, and bought to be used as props in the coal mines of the neighbourhood. Owing to this emigration, and the consequent diminished number of hands, and the general improvement in trade as provisions became cheaper, there was a slight improvement in the flannel trade and in wages in 1832. In 1833 a further rise took place, provisions still falling and the home demand improving, and up to 1837 this advance was fully maintained. In 1838, 1839, and 1840, wages gradually declined, during which time the price of provisions had greatly advanced, and it may be safely affirmed that wages in 1840 were at least 40 per cent., and, in many instances, above 50 per cent., lower than in 1828; and many were unable to procure employment, and vast numbers had only an irregular and precarious employment.

"That a deplorable change has taken place in the condition of the operatives employed in the woollen trade at Rochdale within the past fifty years is admitted by all persons acquainted with their past and present circumstances. The house of the woollen weaver was almost proverbial for a degree of comfort and plenty, such as is now rarely witnessed. The furniture was abundant, always sufficient, not rarely handsome. A good chest of mahogany drawers as a family wardrobe, its excellent polish protected by a large cover of green baize, and a clock in a large and handsome mahogany case, bespoke a degree of affluence and comfort to which their dwellings are now almost entire strangers. Now we see abject poverty on every side. Wages so low that many men with full work are compelled to apply to the parish for relief; their houses are unfurnished, possessing neither wardrobes nor garments; and their hunger-marked countenances bespeak the terrible wrongs they endure. If it be true that protection to landowners gives a home trade so good as to make up for any decrease of foreign demand, how comes it that the home trade has never yet been able to place the flannel trade on its former footing, and to supply the customers of which it was deprived by the American tariff? If the landlord's interest has purchased one piece of flannel more than it would have purchased without the Corn Laws, the price of that piece was first stolen by the law from the weaver who made the piece.

"Minute inquiries show that for fifteen years previous to 1828 there were twenty-eight to thirty journeymen cabinetmakers, and a few boys, regularly and

fully employed in Rochdale. At this time there are only twelve or thirteen journeymen and about ten boys in the trade, and these have not had full and regular employment for a long time past. The population of the town and neighbourhood has greatly increased during the past fifteen or twenty years, but there has been no increase of furniture, clearly proving that the condition of the people is much worse, and their comforts greatly abridged.

"Travelling Scotchmen.—No. 1 travels to Todmorden, Saddleworth, Shaw, Lees, Oldham, Heywood, Wardle, and neighbourhood of Rochdale. Has travelled part of this district for twenty years, dealing with many parties throughout this period: his customers have gradually become poorer, and are now mostly ruined and unable to buy clothing, tea, coffee, &c., as formerly. Six years ago their condition was much better than at present. Todmorden was then his best district—now very much worse. Mills there have worked short time for many months. In his journeys he finds many houses which he has known well furnished almost stripped, the furniture having gradually been disposed of to provide food. Has given up the Wardle district, the people being reduced to poverty so abject that the people can pay for nothing. Honest customers are ashamed to meet him, and skulk away to avoid him when they know he is coming, as they have nothing to pay for what they have had from him. This is a common occurrence about Middleton and that neighbourhood. Many travellers have given up the trade; their once good customers now impoverished, their purchases very small, and bad debts rendering the trade a ruinous one to those engaged in it.

"Shopkeepers, Provision Dealers (1).—The quantity of meal sold in proportion to the flour is much greater than it used to be half-a-dozen or three or four years ago. Sells much less of cheese and sugar, not more than two-thirds of his former sale, and not more than half the tobacco. The quantity of malt is reduced to one-third of his sale in better times; debts cannot be paid; many honest and industrious customers have debts standing over till the times mend.

(2)—More meal in proportion to flour sold now than a few years ago. His customers buy half-a-pound or a pound of meal at once, as they are able. Much less tea sold, sugar one-half less, tobacco one-third less, new butter not much bought, old cheaper, often now used. In cheese the reduction is one-half, bread sold in pennyworths commonly, all common articles of food sold now in very small quantities, debts standing over to better times. Only sells one load of malt where he used to sell four. Boys come for three-ha'porth of meal, in rags—family of seven, sober and industrious—utmost wages with full work, 11s. to 12s. per week—father, 7s. or 8s.; two boys, 4s., setting cards. Only one bed for seven persons; no hope of improvement.

(3)—Double quantity of meal and coarse flour sold in proportion to the whole quantity of bread. Customers who used to buy a pound of sugar now buy a pennyworth, or a quarter of a pound for twopence. Tea sold in quantities as small as half an ounce for halfpenny. Butter as low as a halfpenny or penny. Bacon, 1d., or a quarter of a pound for 2d. Four or five in a family send for half an oatcake, worth halfpenny, with bits and scraps of bacon halfpenny or penny more. Cheese sells most in quantities of 1lb. each. Only sells half as much meal as formerly, and of a lower quality. Potatoes halfpenny or penny very often. At breakfast or dinner hours many come in for a ha'porth or pennyworth of bread. Debts cannot be collected. Knows that many of his customers are short of food. Hears many a curse as the destitute part with their last coin for half a meal for themselves and their children. Wishes Sir Robert Peel might stand in his shop for one day, and will gladly let any gentleman do so who doubts any part of his statement.

Butchers, skimmers, and tanners estimate that four years ago one hundred and eighty beasts were killed weekly in the parish of Rochdale; now not more than sixty-five to seventy are killed; sheep and pigs much fewer; poor pieces eagerly bought; good joints difficult of sale; customers buy 1d. or 2d. worth of suet or bits of steak, cannot buy more. The condition of the population very much worse than four years ago.

The reports of the Dispensary exhibit a very serious increase in the number of applicants for medical assistance. In 1835 and 1836 the applicants were 1,809; in 1840 and 1841, 2,444; including only eleven months of this year. And by the end of the year, at the present rate of applications, they will have amounted to 2,556.

"The Good Samaritan Society.—The reports show a great increase in the number of destitute families visited in each year of high prices; in three years, 1835, 1836, and 1837, the whole number of families thus visited and relieved was 607; amount,

£204 15s. 0d. In three years, 1838, 1839, and 1840, 983 families; amount, £304 18s. 0d. Soup given to the poor last spring, 12,926 gallons.

Poor Rates.—Castleton Township:—

March, 1835 to 1836	...	...	...	...	...	£1,269
" 1836 to 1837	...	...	...	...	...	£1,147
" 1837 to 1838	...	...	...	...	...	£1,358
						<hr/>
						£3,774
March, 1838 to 1839	...	...	...	...	...	£1,489
" 1839 to 1840	...	...	...	...	...	£1,616
" 1840 to 1841	...	...	...	...	...	£2,469
						<hr/>
						£5,574

Increase £1,800, or 48 per cent.; in 1836, £1,147; in 1841, £2,469; or increase 115 per cent. At the beginning of this year the township was in debt £700, now it owes £1,100.

Persons relieved, September, 1835 to 1837, two years	...	...	968
" " " 1839 to 1841, two years	...	...	1,688
Difference 720, or 74 per cent. increase.			

From March 1836 to 1837, twelve months, there were 454 relieved, and the three months now last past, September to December, 421 relieved, as many within 33. Amount expended from March to September, 1841, £347, or at the rate of £2,694 per annum, being an increase over the amount in 1835 of 134 per cent.

Poor Rates.—Spotland Township.

1835 and 1836, amount expended	...	...	...	£4,638
1839 and 1840 " "	...	...	...	£6,332
				<hr/>
Difference...	...	...	...	£1,694

being an increase in the dear years over the cheap years of 36 per cent.

In 1835 the township owed	...	...	...	£277
The present debt is	...	...	...	£790

"Surgeons' Opinion.—'We, the undersigned, are of opinion that owing to the high price of food and the want of employment the labouring classes in the Borough of Rochdale and its neighbourhood are now suffering great and increasing privations. That they are, in great numbers, unable to obtain wholesome food in sufficient quantity to maintain them in health; and that thus they are predisposed to disease and rendered unable to resist its attacks. That affections and diseases of the skin, with many other complaints, are caused by a poor supply of food and by innutritious food; and that many cases of appalling distress and suffering come almost daily under our notice. In these respects the population amongst whom we practise are in a much worse position now than they were five or six years ago; and that for three years past their condition has been gradually sinking, and we never knew them in so bad a state at any former period.

"T. H. WARDLEWORTH.
 "ROBT. BARKER.
 "GEO. MORRIS.
 "WALTER DUNLOP.

"Rochdale, Dec. 13th, 1841."

Mr. Bright observed:—

"We saw around us wide-spreading distress. Misery was seen in the house of every poor man. Poor men he was ashamed to call them, but that was the term now applied to every working man. Misery was to be seen on his very threshold: haggard destitution and extreme poverty were the most prominent things in his family. The consequence was that discontent had so pervaded the country that scarcely any working man would lift a finger in defence of those institutions which Englishmen were wont to be proud of. Neither the monarch nor the aristocracy were safe under such a state of things—a state of things that would blast the fairest prospects and destroy the most powerful nation that ever existed."

Mr. Bright moved the following resolution :—

“That the district of which Manchester is the centre, engaged in the various branches of the cotton trade and its dependencies, is suffering under a general depression, the duration of which has no parallel in the history of Lancashire; that it is in evidence before this meeting that the condition of the surrounding population, both employer and operative, is greatly deteriorated; that fixed capital, such as buildings, machinery, &c., has depreciated in value nearly one-half since 1835; that capitalists, as a body, have long ceased to obtain a profitable return for their investments; that bankruptcy and insolvency have alarmingly increased; that the shopkeepers have suffered corresponding reverses; that the reward of labour has been generally diminished; that great numbers of skilful and deserving workmen are either wholly or partially unemployed; and that pauperism, disease, crime, and mortality have made fearful inroads amongst the poorer classes of the community; that, in the opinion of the deputies now assembled from the various towns of Lancashire, all these evils are experienced at the present moment with unmitigated severity, and that there is no visible prospect of any amelioration of the distresses of this great community.”

It was seconded by Alderman Brooks, and carried, only one hand being held up against it.

Mr. Bright's heart yearned towards the suffering and sorrowful, the oppressed and helpless; for penury depresses the spirits as it emaciates the body. Thousands of poor people were forced to break up their homes through the want of employment, and lead the lives of mendicants.

“The mother whom he loves shall quit her home,
An aged father at his side shall roam;
His little ones shall weeping with him go,
And a young wife participate his woe;
Whilst scorn'd and scowl'd upon by every face,
They pine for food, and beg from place to place.”

A nation cannot be prosperous when food is dear, employment scarce, and wages low. Yet at this time as many as 500 carriages were to be seen daily in Hyde Park, chiefly belonging to the landed gentry, which formed a strange contrast with the deplorable condition of the working class. During this bitter distress Tom Hood's scathing rhyme, depicting the sufferings of the poor, opportunely reminded the influential gentry of the appalling disparity between the price of bread and of labour, in his lines :—

“O God, that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap.”

Although the distress was so widespread all over the country, it had been the practice for years amongst the importers of butter when unable to sell at a profit to make butter into sheep-grease by pouring tar into the casks, and thus they avoided paying the heavy duty of 2½d. per lb., together with the dues and freightage, amounting to 4d. per lb. A return made to the House of Commons also proved that since the enactment of the sliding

scale of 1828, 2,330 quarters of wheat, 63 quarters of barley, 783 quarters of oats, 4 quarters of rye, 23 quarters of peas, 38 quarters of beans, 43 quarters of Indian corn, and 26 cwt. of flour had been abandoned in bond, and as this food was not worth the cost of keeping, it was destroyed by being thrown into the Thames, under the direction of Custom House officers.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROGRESS OF THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE'S AGITATION.

John Bright's First Speech in the Metropolis—Increase of the Distress—The Starving Operatives—Increased Emigration to America—Mr. Gladstone's First Interview with Mr. Bright, and the Opinion he Formed of him—Painful Interview with Sir Robert Peel—Feargus O'Connor's "Sacred Month"—Visit of the "Plug Dragoons" to Rochdale, and John Bright's Advice to them—A Scene Between Bright and Feargus O'Connor.

MR. BRIGHT'S first speech in the metropolis, delivered with great power and effect at the assembly of Free Trade delegates held on the 8th of February, 1842, in the large room of the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, under the presidency of Mr. Duncan McLaren, raised him in the estimation of his hearers. His name forthwith became known throughout the length and breadth of England, and his orations were spread over the land by thousands. There were about 600 persons in the room. Mr. Daniel O'Connell was present at the conference, and was one of the speakers, but Mr. Bright compared favourably with him, and became a universal favourite. His presence was hailed on all sides, and with the support of Villiers, Cobden, and their friends, branches of the League were established in most of the large towns and cities. In the course of his speech at the conference, Mr. Bright said he came from a neighbourhood where the question was looked upon as one of life and death by thousands of honest men, and if in that room there were any of those who had no conception of the state of things to which this country was fast hastening under these mischievous laws, he should like them to go with him into the streets and lanes where he could take them, and if they had any intellect, any heart, he was sure they would go away fully convinced of the necessity for the total and immediate repeal of this law. He had a resolution to propose, but before doing so he would, with their permission, read a short resolution passed, at a meeting held in Rochdale, on the 1st of February, appointing him as delegate to that conference. It had been unanimously resolved at the meeting held at Rochdale, "That the deputation from this association be instructed to oppose the Corn Laws as a cruel oppression, inflicting grievous evils on the great bulk of our population, as contrary to the most obvious require-

ments of morality and religion, and a wrong of so odious a nature as to make it imperatively necessary to insist on its total and immediate abolition." Mr. Bright further informed those assembled that a number of speeches had been made at the meeting in Rochdale, and he dared not go back to his native town unless he had acted up to that document, such was the feeling there for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. In the neighbourhood in which he lived the trade principally consisted in the manufacture of flannel. He was not interested in it in any way, but he knew the extent to which the Corn Laws had operated against that trade. There were several thousand persons who lived by it in his neighbourhood, and they, in consequence of the operation of those laws, were driven from their country. In consequence of the glaring evils of those laws he had turned his attention to them day and night, and he was firmly convinced that there was no point of view in which they could be considered that did not show their evil operation and call for their total and immediate abolition.

Years of suffering had greatly sharpened the naturally shrewd intellect of the Lancashire operatives, and they knew the cause of their distress, and that when they were starving the merchants and manufacturers could not be prosperous. The distress throughout the country in 1842 increased the tide of emigration. The total number of persons who emigrated from England during the year ending January 5th, 1842, was 72,104; from Scotland, 14,000; Ireland, 32,428; making a total of 118,592. The scenes that were witnessed at the sea-ports as these poor emigrants reluctantly left their native land were heartrending, for many were so poor that they were unable to pay for the passage of their wives and families, and had to leave them behind until they should procure employment and means to send for them.

" We but hear
Of the survivors' toil in their new land,
Their number and success, but who can number
The hearts that broke in silence, of that malady,
Which calls up green and native fields to view? "

At this time the pawnbrokers' warehouses were full of goods, and the grocers, although greatly reduced in number, were not doing half the business. The poor rates in Oldham at this period were four times the amount they were in 1839. At Marsden, near Burnley, out of 5,000 inhabitants 2,000 were out of employment, and the wages had been considerably reduced. Mills were closed on account of the owners being unable to pay

the poor-rate. One week only one beast was killed at Accrington, although the population numbered 10,000. Some of the poor people were so famished that they ate a diseased calf. Twenty years previous to this date, when the inhabitants were not more than 5,000, from five to ten beasts were killed weekly at the same town. A number of half-starved families at Chorley ate part of a cow which had died from disease.

The Rev. Mr. Beith stated, at a public meeting at Stirling, North Britain, that a young man in that town, of respectable parents, was observed one morning to pass a huxter's shop, at the door of which stood a measure of potatoes. After passing the shop a little way, he returned and took one of the potatoes and went away. The shopkeeper allowed him to go. On the day after the young man returned and did the same thing. On the third day he took another potato, and on the fourth day five potatoes. The last day the shopkeeper had a police officer in attendance, and both of them followed the young man home, and there they found an aged mother and two sisters dependent upon him for support. There was a pot upon a poor fire, and upon the shopkeeper asking the mother if she knew where her son got the potatoes, she replied: "No, I was afraid to ask." Upon taking off the lid part of a dead dog was found and the potatoes, and it was this that the family intended to eat that day.

Messrs. Bright and Cobden in their speeches explained to the people the cause of their suffering, how the evil was to be remedied—simplified, in fact, principles of political economy. How could Mr. Bright be silent when trade languished, when the dizzying mill-wheel was compelled to rest, and the looms were deserted; when those who had spent busy lives in the factories were becoming emigrants or paupers, or, urged by hunger and want, were being driven to the commission of crimes, or prematurely to their graves. He could not remain indifferent when the people pined for bread, and had to "beg to bury their dead;" for he knew well that God had never ordained that the produce of the earth should be enjoyed exclusively by the rich.

In 1842 Mr. Bright was a member of a deputation to Lord Ripon, President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. Gladstone, the Vice-President; and this was the first time Mr. Bright met his future Premier and colleague. Lord Ripon, in reply to an allusion to the United States, remarked that the Americans themselves had a law against the admission of Canadian wheat. "Yes," Mr. Bright rejoined, "and the carriers of that measure quoted your example as a precedent." Mr. Gladstone anxiously

inquired if there was any symptom of improvement in trade, and was informed that the distress, so far from being alleviated, was greatly aggravated. Mr. Gladstone has kindly supplied the following account of this event:—

“We met at the time specified in your book. A large deputation from Lancashire came to Lord Ripon, President of the Board of Trade; I, as Vice-President, was present. They sat in a long row down the room at the end. Mr. Bright was, I think, almost the youngest amongst them. He is the only one of them all whom at this distance of time I recollect. I was much struck with the singular combination of business and energy in his countenance.”

The delegates again met at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, in the Strand, on the 9th of July, and about noon 150 of them proceeded to Downing Street, where they were immediately introduced to Sir Robert Peel. It had been previously arranged that they should consecutively lay before the Premier the melancholy state of the different districts of the country. Mr. A. P. Taylor was the chairman. Deep, indeed, was the feeling produced by the courteous, yet firm, warning in the remarks made by Mr. John Ridgway. Mr. Brooks followed, and he portrayed the misery of the cold and foodless children that he was daily called to witness in the town of Manchester. Sir Robert Peel was very much agitated and ill at ease. Nearly the whole of the time his eyes were downcast, and he could not keep the hand steady in which he held a paper. The Rev. Mr. Lowe, of Forfar, in his speech, quoted the passage of Scripture, “He that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him,” and pictured heartrending scenes that had taken place in the North. Sir Robert Peel was very nervous, and with one hand he tried to steady the other, but he was unable to keep it from shaking, and great commiseration was felt for him. At length he promised to bring the facts and statements before Her Majesty’s Government, and was relieved when the painful interview closed.

The Chartists in the year 1842 were busy agitating the development of Mr. Feargus O’Connor’s scheme, “the sacred month” and the “national holiday,” which was to inaugurate an insurrection. Mr. F. O’Connor possessed at that period, and for several years after, a great and dangerous influence over the manufacturing operative population. So sure were some of the Yorkshire Chartists of a successful revolution, that under O’Connor’s guidance at Leeds they had allotted the principal mansions, demises, and estates of the kingdom in the wills that they had made preparatory to the intended revolution. For his services he modestly took to himself, by anticipation, the estates of Earl Fitzwilliam and the Duke of Devonshire, but, of course, he was

only to hold them as trustee for the woolcombers and Yorkshire weavers. On the afternoon of the 10th of August, 1842, information was received in Rochdale that a mob had arrived so near as Royton, and that the mills at that village, and Shaw and Crompton, had been stopped early in the day; and that if there was any delay after the mandate had been given the method was to knock the plug out of the boiler, which emptied itself and put the fire out at the same time. A messenger arrived at Rochdale in the afternoon for a magistrate, when Mr. Wm. Chadwick, accompanied by Mr. Phoenix (superintendent of the police), rode round by Burnage, Crompton, Shaw, and Royton, but there was no serious breach of the peace. The next morning, Thursday, the magistrates met at the Flying Horse Inn, Packer Street, to swear in special constables; the old pensioners were also called out, and the police were supplied with cutlasses. About nine o'clock in the morning the mob arrived in Oldham Road. Mr. James Sutcliffe and Messrs. Hoyle and James Livsey were first summoned to turn out their men and stop their mills, which they immediately did, as it would have been unavailing to make any attempt to resist 5,000 or 6,000 people. Mr. George Ashworth (the magistrate) met the people here and tried to stop them in their course, but it was all to no purpose. They faithfully promised him not to break the peace, and assured him that their object was not plunder. They were willing to work, they said, and all they wanted was a fair day's wage for a fair day's work. Mr. James Brierley was then ordered to stop his mill. When he asked his visitors what their object was in stopping all the mills, they replied that they wanted the wages they had in 1840. Mill after mill was visited on the line of route through the town, and the plugs drawn without resistance. When the mob was making its way down Drake Street it had increased to at least 15,000 persons. They were led by women, eight or ten abreast, singing lively songs.

The shopkeepers in various parts of the town threw loaves to the crowd, which they devoured like hungry wolves. Mr. John Bright's factory, on Cronkeyshaw, was next visited, and the workpeople were ordered out of the mills and the machinery was stopped. A large number of the mob visited the residence of Mr. Jacob Bright, senr., and sang songs. He sent for three skips of bread and distributed it amongst the people. A meeting was next held on Cronkeyshaw, which was addressed by several individuals, and it was decided to hold another meeting at seven o'clock in the evening, to lay down plans for their future action. A party was then dismissed to Whitworth to stop

all the mills in that part. Another party was despatched to Hooley Clough and Heywood for the same purpose. The shops remained closed all day. Every iron foundry where men were employed received a visit from the "plug dragoons," as they were called, and was stopped from working. A number of men working at St. Mary's Church were compelled to desist as the crowd passed through Cheetham Street. Masons, bricklayers, joiners, mechanics, and others, struck work and joined the procession as it passed from mill to mill. Several gentlemen gave them money very liberally, which, in all cases, was spent on bread for those who had come a great distance. At seven o'clock in the evening the meeting was held near Mr. Bright's old factory. The speakers were Charles Howarth, a mechanic named Ashley, two strangers, and Mr. Thomas Livsey. About 7,000 persons were present, one-fourth of whom were women. One of the speakers said he could not take part against the manufacturers, who were in as bad a condition as the workmen. The landowners had made a law to prevent them exchanging their goods for corn, whereby they were as much under the aristocratic oppression as the poorest man amongst them. He hoped they would do all in their power for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and he trusted that the middle classes would assist them to procure the Charter, which would be a remedy for all the evils that the working man had to complain of. The meeting was adjourned until five o'clock the next morning, when their further course of action was to be determined. All the speakers implored their hearers to abstain from any breach of the peace, and by all means to respect the rights of property. Next morning (Friday) the meeting was held at five o'clock, and was opened by singing a hymn. A woman addressed the gathering in a very animated manner. She was a teetotaler, and advised them to shun the alehouse and protect their wives and families. By six o'clock the crowd had increased to 4,000, when the meeting broke up, and a large number present marched to Bacup.

On the following Wednesday nearly the whole of the mills resumed work. On Thursday morning news was received that a mob was marching from Oldham to put a stop to the mills that had recommenced work. The special constables and the military and the magistrates proceeded forthwith as far as Buersil bridge, for the purpose of stopping their further progress. Groups of tens and twenties came straggling on the road from Oldham, and these it was deemed advisable to stop. In an attempt of this kind Mr. George Ashworth, the magistrate, was pulled

from his horse by a person endeavouring to push his way by force through the police. Sergeant Carswell knocked the man down with his truncheon, and he was escorted by the military to the barracks. A scout bringing word that the mob from Oldham had taken another route, and was on its way to Milnrow through Shaw, Messrs. W. Chadwick, B. Heape, H. Kelsall, and C. Royds (magistrates), accompanied by a posse of police, and a troop of the 11th Hussars and a number of foot soldiers, proceeded direct to Milnrow, where the mob had just arrived. As they had turned the hands out of two mills and pulled out the plugs the Riot Act was read, and an attempt made to disperse the crowd without delay. A volley of stones was thrown at the police, and Mr. W. Chadwick was struck on the head with a stone, which cut his hat through and almost laid his skull bare. Sergeant Carswell led up the police while assailed on all sides with stones. He pursued the mob until it left the high road for the fields, when he dismounted his horse for the purpose of pursuing the fugitives on foot. The military and police returned to Rochdale at 12 o'clock.

As the "turn outs" had assembled at a meeting on Cronkeyshaw, and turned out Mr. Petrie's hands during the noon hour, the military were sent in pursuit, and overtook the mob at Hanging Road factory, where they were stopping the people from working. The infantry was headed by Messrs. John Fenton, Henry Kelsall, George Ashworth, and Benjamin Heape. The bellman was sent round the town to inform the inhabitants that the Riot Act had been read, and to request them to keep within doors, as the military would clear the streets. This was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and before five the dragoons had dispersed the great mass of the people. An extra number of special constables went on duty at night. On Friday morning it was intended to hold a meeting on Cronkeyshaw, but the military took possession of the ground and the "plug-drawers" did not put in an appearance. The mills resumed work the same day, but many of the workpeople were absent. The manufacturers refused to give the advance asked.

After one of the meetings on Cronkeyshaw Mr. John Bright addressed a large number of persons near Greenbank Mill, saying that it was a great mistake to resort to violence by plug drawing, and that violence would not serve any good cause; that the strike was a mistake if it was undertaken for a political object, and he hoped they would keep the peace while the struggle lasted. They were prepared to open their mill any day

when the workpeople were ready to return to their work. On the 17th of August Mr. John Bright issued an address to the working men of Rochdale, in which he stated "you are suffering, you have long suffered, your wages for many years declined, and your position has gradually and steadily become worse. Your sufferings have naturally produced discontent, and you have turned eagerly to almost any scheme which gave hope of relief. . . . An advance of wages to the rate paid in 1840, and ten hours labour per day, were the demands you were urged to make. But when the turning out in this district was completed, and you had become excited, these demands were abandoned, and you were urged to refuse to work until the Charter became the law. Many of you know full well that neither Act of Parliament nor act of multitude can keep up wages. You know that trade has long been bad, and that with a bad trade wages cannot rise." Mr. Bright concluded by recommending the dissatisfied operatives to return to their employment, and it had more effect than the repressive measures adopted by the local authorities, for in a day or two work was resumed.

In several other large towns there were similar gatherings of operatives, who destroyed machinery, and prevented their fellow-labourers from working. A proclamation against such disturbances was issued on the 14th of August, and troops from London, including the guards, were sent to Manchester. Lives were lost, and many persons were wounded in Preston, Burslem, and Manchester, in the collision between the military and the rioters, and the railway communications were threatened. There was great excitement in Macclesfield, Stockport, Bolton, Dudley, and Huddersfield.

On one occasion when Bright and Cobden were waiting at one of the side stations on the London and North-Western Railway, Mr. Feargus O'Connor, who had two days previously abused the two eminent members of the League and their cause, walked into the same station. Mr. Bright at once accosted O'Connor, and dissected his fallacies to his face so thoroughly and with such freedom, that the chartist was greatly relieved when the train did appear and enabled him to escape the crushing arguments of his opponents. Some time afterwards, when the League was making rapid strides, a number of the leading chartists sought to cling to the skirts of its garment, but Bright and Cobden very wisely kept their aim free from entanglement with other public questions.

It was again autumn, and the fairest flowers were beginning

to wither ; the deep green of vegetation was passing away into the sere and yellow leaf, and nature was donning her russet robe. A train of sad associations were renewed

“In looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.”

But the twelve months' hard work in trying to mitigate the sufferings of the poor had absorbed much of Mr. Bright's attention, and his labours, instead of relaxing, went on increasing.

The members of the Anti-Corn-Law League held a special meeting on the 18th of May, 1842, in Newall's Buildings, Manchester, for the purpose of receiving a report from the council respecting the course of agitation to be adopted. Mr. Robert Hyde Greg presided. It was agreed that England and Wales should be mapped into twelve districts, and that such a plan should be extended into Scotland and Ireland, and that the lecturers of the League should instruct the people on the subject of the evils of the Corn Laws. Mr. Bright reminded those present that three years had elapsed since the League had been formed, and though at first they seemed to have made little or no progress, now they might say that they had made considerable progress. The League were well prepared for taking the field. Their funds were larger than they had ever been before, for they had more money in hand than had ever been spent in any two years since the commencement of the struggle.

Mr. Bright, on the 5th of July, 1842, was present at the National Anti-Corn-Law Conference, which was held at Herbert's Hotel, Palace Yard, London, which met for the purpose of taking into consideration the distress of the country. Mr. A. P. Taylor, of London, presided. Mr. Bright informed those present that the distress was universal, and if they went to Scotland they found Forfar, Glasgow, and Paisley in desolation. If they came farther south, they would hear from the delegates from Newcastle that almost the whole of the working population were out of employment, and were living on the charity given out by the town council. He had received a letter from Shields, in which it was stated that the trade was almost annihilated. In Lancashire many of the inhabitants of the towns were subsisting upon charity. Bolton and Stockport were in a state of desolation. In Leeds it was worse still. There were there 30,000 or 40,000 persons existing upon charity. If they went to Sheffield, he believed they would find that the men were not possessed of one quarter of the comfort they had three years ago—men as able as

any living, yet they were driven to the last state of distress. It was the same in Derbyshire. Farther south, in the agricultural counties of England, the poor rates at that moment were rapidly on the increase. If they went to Somersetshire, they would find that 20,000 or 30,000 persons were out of employment who a short time previous were in comparative comfort. In Ireland they found that the famine was stalking through the land, and that riots were taking place, and that men were killed by the police because they endeavoured to obtain food. How, then, could they sit calmly by? Humanity, if nothing more, would call them from their homes; but there was a feeling of pity; their own safety and the safety of the country were at stake. The time had come when justice and mercy must take the place of cruelty and oppression, and if the Government still refused to hearken, he for one trembled for the result.

On the 29th of July, the delegates met again at Herbert's Hotel, in Palace Yard, and Mr. A. P. Taylor presided. Mr. John Bright, in his address, remarked that the remedy they asked at the hands of the Government was one that must be granted, and he trusted that it would be granted before it was too late, and before the malady had gone too far to be remedied. The delay of this one act of justice was but adding to the score of their long career of misgovernment, and when the day of final reckoning came it would be found a heavy account to settle. Mr. Hume, Mr. Villiers, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. O'Connell, also addressed the meeting.

At a meeting at Newall's Buildings, on the 6th of October, Mr. Bright, in referring to the existing distress, said this was the state of things they found at the close of one of the most productive and glorious summers within living memory; and the distress was produced almost, if not wholly, by the Corn Laws.

Bread being at a very high rate, the labouring classes had little or nothing left to expend on other commodities, and after cases of illness the doctors themselves declared that it was often very difficult to rally a constitution thus ill-fed; that they gave them tonics when in reality no other medicine was required than a slice of beef or mutton per day. Mr. John Bright, in conjunction with Mr. Richard Cobden and other gentlemen who boldly came forward to oppose the deadly Corn Laws, instilled courage into the minds of the starving people; for if they had been left in their despondency the result would probably have been the death of hundreds from want of proper food. In the dark a glimmering light is often sufficient for the pilot to steer his course by.

Trivial incidents noticed by Mr. Bright encouraged him in his labours, and assured him that they would end in success.

“Oh, my Conservative friends! who still especially name and struggle to approve yourselves Conservative,” Carlyle wrote, “would to heaven I could persuade you of this world-old fact—than which fate is not surer—that Truth and Justice alone are capable of being conserved and preserved! If I were the Conservative party of England—which is another bold figure of speech—I would not for £100,000 an hour allow these Corn Laws to continue. Do you know what questions—not as to Corn Laws and sliding scales alone—they are forcing every reflective Englishman to ask himself—questions insoluble or hitherto unsolved—deeper than any of our logic plummets hitherto will sound—questions deep enough, which it were better we did not name, even in thought? There are various things that must be begun, let them end where they can.”

Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden addressed the League's weekly meeting, held in Manchester, on the 3rd of November, 1842, under the presidency of Mr. George Wilson. On the 10th of the same month another meeting in the Manchester League Rooms took place, to inquire into the state of the £50,000 fund the League was attempting to raise. Mr. Bright and his friend, Mr. Cobden, were two of the six speakers. On the 17th of November, accompanied by Mr. R. R. R. Moore, they visited the ancient town of Coventry, the birthplace of Bright's forefathers, and noted for its legend of Lady Godiva, who abolished an oppressive tax upon the town, “and built herself an everlasting name.” A meeting was held in the evening of the date of their arrival, and Mr. Bright entertained the attentive audience with logical arguments against Sir R. Peel's sliding scale measure, which was passed that year, and in favour of the total repeal of the Corn Laws.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTINUED RAID AGAINST THE CORN LAWS.

Visits to Huddersfield, Manchester, Kendal, Nottingham, Holmfirth, Preston, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Stourbridge, Birmingham, Stirling, Glasgow, Hawick, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Lancaster, Edinburgh, Dundee, Perth, and Ashton—Erection of the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.

THE first of a series of *soirées* in Yorkshire was held at the cloth-manufacturing town of Huddersfield, in the Philosophical Hall, on the 18th of November, a month noted for its gloom—when trees are stripped of all their beauty, and birds sit shivering, “a dull despondent flock;” but the people on this occasion were animated, and assembled in great numbers to listen to Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden. In four days both gentlemen had returned to Manchester, and were present at a meeting of merchants, spinners, manufacturers, and tradespeople, which was held in the Town Hall, under the presidency of Mr. R. Hyde Greg. Thirty-six gentlemen were appointed to canvass for subscriptions for the £50,000 fund. Mr. Bright informed those present that at that time meetings had been arranged for every day in the month, and that every day brought in statements of others that were being appointed. On behalf of his father, himself, and brothers, he presented a subscription of £300, and promised to give further sums if it was needed. A few days after Mr. Bright was present at another meeting of the League, and gave an account of the meetings that he had attended at Coventry, Liverpool, and other towns. He said that on the 21st of November he was at a meeting at Accrington, which consisted of at least 500 persons, and that the room was packed for two hours, and that he never was in a place so much like an oven before. The meeting in the Sheffield Music Hall was the largest ever held in the hall of that town.

On the 29th of November, Mr. Bright visited the old manufacturing town of Kendal, and the white houses covered with blue slates attracted his attention. He received an enthusiastic greeting in the evening, at a meeting held in the Whitehall Assembly Room, and his speech was listened to with marked attention. On the 1st of December he was again in

Manchester at a meeting of the League, and he and Mr. Cobden gave an account of their labours. The evening after, Mr. Bright was at a large meeting at the seaport town of Sunderland, which was held in the Athenæum, and on the 12th of the same month he returned to his native town, and a large number of persons assembled in the Theatre, Toad Lane. Mr. John Fenton, the late member for the borough, was the chairman, and Dr. Bowring, M.P., Mr. Cobden, and Mr. Bright were the speakers. The latter gave an account of the meetings he had attended at Kendal, Carlisle, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sunderland, South Shields, and Darlington. It was midnight before the meeting broke up, and £1,695 6s. 6d. were subscribed to the funds of the League. The liberality of this gathering, as well as the others in the various towns, surprised Mr. Bright, and the formidable amount contributed gave the protectionists a good idea of the strength of the power which was arrayed against them.

“Single sands have little weight,
Many make a drawing freight.”

The following evening Mr. Bright was at Nottingham. Here a meeting was held in the Independent Chapel, Friar's Lane, and so important was the event that twelve reporters were present. Mr. Alderman Heard presided. Mr. Wm. Biggs, the Mayor of Leicester, and Mr. Thomas Wakefield, Mayor of Nottingham, also addressed the meeting with Mr. Bright, and £997 were subscribed.

Mr. Bright next travelled to Holmfirth, and an audience of about 1,000 assembled in the Town Hall on the 15th of December, and for nearly two hours he entertained them with his speech. Four days after, he accompanied Mr. Cobden and Colonel Thompson to the fashionable town of Preston, the birthplace of Arkwright, who invented the power-loom. A meeting was held in the Theatre. At the front of the stage an artificial canal had been made, on which a small vessel kept making her trips during the evening. The building was crowded, chiefly by operatives engaged in the manufacture of cotton, who listened very attentively to the distinguished trio from the League. The metropolis of South Staffordshire, Wolverhampton, was visited by Mr. Bright on the 23rd of December, and a meeting was held in the Music Hall. The audience was chiefly composed of mechanics, many of whose homes were at that time scenes of want and distress.

On the 28th of December he was again in Manchester, at a meeting of the League which was held in the Corn Exchange,

and in the course of a speech, five columns in length, he remarked :—

“I assure you that wherever we go, at every meeting we address, for my own share, I hide my diminished head. I am humiliated at the manner in which I am treated at these meetings—(Applause)—they look upon persons who come from the Anti-Corn-Law League as the very deliverers of the commerce of the country from the shackles in which it has been so long enthralled. (Cheers.) And thus we see that a responsibility lies upon us. The League has risen from a very small beginning. It had a great truth in hand, however, and that truth has grown and spread till it will soon be admitted by the whole population of this empire. . . . The time is now come when we must no longer look upon this infamous law as a mistake on the part of the aristocracy and the landowners—it was no mistake of the law-makers, it was no accident, chance had nothing to do with it—it was a crime, a crime of the deepest dye against the rights of industry and against the well-being of the British people, and

‘Not all that heralds rake from coffin’d clay,
Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.’”

The meeting rose *en masse* and cheered lustily, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs.

The day after, Mr. Bright was at a meeting in Dudley, Staffordshire, at the Independent Chapel, and he told his audience that it was astonishing that for twenty-seven years the people should have suffered the Corn Laws; and more astonishing that now he should have come nearly 100 miles to talk to people about a law which should have caused them not to give sleep to their eyes, nor slumber to their eyelids, till they had caused it to be repealed. It was a law enacted expressly to make a scarcity of food, and if it did not do this it did not answer the purpose for which it was made.

Mr. Bright continued his journey in the mineral districts of Staffordshire, even in this roughest month of the year, when snow “comes down at once in hoar antiquity,” and was next at the populous town of Stourbridge, at a meeting at the British School Room, High Street, on the night of the 30th of December. Mr. Robert Scott, M.P., presided.

An Anti-Corn-Law Festival was held in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 3rd of January, 1843, presided over by Mr. Schofield, M.P. Mr. Bright was present, and he said that he had the authority of the chairman to say that the inhabitants of Birmingham had not for several years past found themselves in a more prosperous condition than the rest of their fellow-countrymen, and every manufacturer had found himself gradually sinking from a state of independence and prosperity to the very opposite condition; and that there were industrious, sober, honest working men in Birmingham, formerly in constant employment well paid, who now had precarious employment at reduced wages. In Lan-

cashire they thought that the people of Birmingham had gone to sleep; yet he had it in his memory that in former years the men of Birmingham had done something; and he remembered the time when every post which reached them in the North was looked to with exciting interest; but now what was going on in the town of Birmingham. He asked whether there had been a rise in the price of manufactured goods in proportion to the rise of the price of bread. He could speak from experience that the prices of goods in Manchester were lower in the twelve months just past than they had been for many years previously. It was the same in Staffordshire Potteries and the iron districts, where a ton of straw cost as much as a ton of iron. Mr. Cobden and Mr. Alderman Brooks, of Manchester, addressed the same meeting.

Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and Colonel Thompson next visited the city of Stirling, which commands a fine view of the Grampian range—Ben Lomond, Ben Venue, Ben Ledi, Ben Voirlich, and the winding of the Forth through fertile land. In the evening of the day of their arrival a meeting was held, and the attendance was considered by the residents the largest that had assembled for twenty-seven years. From Stirling they went to the commercial metropolis of Scotland—Glasgow—to a meeting of the Young Men's Free Trade Association, and Mr. Bright afterwards declared "that a more magnificent meeting, I think, I scarcely ever beheld." Next they travelled to the manufacturing town of Hawick, in Roxburghshire, and about 500 persons assembled to listen to their addresses. From Hawick they went on to Newcastle-on-Tyne, the great emporium of coals. Special trains brought large numbers of persons from Sunderland and North and South Shields, so anxious were the people in that part of the country to hear them. Sir John Fife, formerly Mayor of Newcastle, officiated as chairman. "When I look abroad over the face of this island," said Mr. Bright, "and see all that Providence has given us, and all that we have the power to accomplish, and behold such masses of misery where there ought to be gladness and joy, pleasure and delight, I really wonder how it is, if there be judgment in heaven, that it does not come down upon us who have neglected the duty imposed upon us." Mr. W. L. Larle Metcalf, M.P., and Mr. Wawn, M.P., as well as Mr. Cobden and Colonel Thompson, addressed the meeting.

On the 10th of January, Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore arrived at the ancient town of Lancaster, and so large was the attendance at the Music Hall that two meetings had to be held to give the

inhabitants an opportunity of listening to the distinguished members of the League.

Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and Col. Thompson arrived on the 12th of January at "the modern Athens," the capital of Scotland—Edinburgh, the birthplace of Sir Walter Scott and Henry Brougham. A *soirée* in the evening was held in the Waterloo Rooms, and the audience, after listening to the speeches, contributed £600 to the funds of the League. *The Scotsman*, in describing Mr. Bright at the time, states:—"He seems a man nearly of the same age as Mr. Cobden, or rather younger, and is full of fire and vivacity, with no small share of depth and power."

On the 23rd of January they travelled to the seaport and manufacturing town of Dundee, and a meeting was held at the Royal Circus, Meadowside. 2,000 persons listened to their speeches. The inhabitants of the historic city of Perth, long the residence of Scottish kings, and where Knox preached his first sermon, had next the opportunity of listening to Mr. Bright and his colleagues. Although only an hour's notice was given calling the meeting, 300 persons assembled in the Council Chamber, and municipal honours were conferred upon Mr. Cobden.

Mr. Bright was again in Manchester on the 27th of January at a meeting in the Corn Exchange, and, in alluding to the presence of twenty-nine ministers of religion at the Edinburgh meeting, he said:—

"They believe that the Corn Law is a law operating constantly, incessantly, and most powerfully to destroy the labours which they are engaged in bringing to perfection amongst their people, and therefore they come forward, unanimously almost, throughout Scotland, to raise their voice against the longer continuance of this law. I would say of these men, as was said of some preachers of the olden time:—

'No servile doctrines such as power approves,
They to the poor and broken-hearted taught.
With truths which tyrants hate and conscience loves,
They winged and barbed the arrows of their thought.
Sin in high places was the mark they sought.'

(Cheers.) . . . We had a meeting at Dunfermline, a meeting composed almost entirely of weavers; and there was a most unanimous opinion there expressed in condemnation of the Corn Laws. We went to Leith also, and there we found an enthusiastic reception from many who have hitherto been scarcely convinced that our course was wise or our object just. We went from thence to Kirkcaldy; but on the way, after crossing the Firth from Edinburgh, on our landing, the whole population turned out to meet us, with a band of music, as if they had intended that we should make a sort of triumphant entry into their country. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) . . . It is customary for a man, or a nation, to look back to a long line of ancestry, and to say what their forefathers have been; and it may be no ignoble boast that they had forefathers who did many good things; but I would ask you to consider the responsibility which lies upon you, not for the present generation of men, women, and children whom you see round you, but for the generation yet unborn, to seek to overthrow this great monopoly, and all other monopolies, and to remember from whom these monopolies spring, and then the

reputation of what you have done will go on to the end of time, co-extensive with the blessings that you have secured to future generations, to unborn millions who would bless the hour when the Anti-Corn-Law League of this country succeeded in putting its foot upon the neck of the hideous, most detestable, and wicked monopoly. (Cheers.) I have done—it may be thought that I have spoken strongly, and so I may have done, but it is because I feel strongly. It is from no natural and uncontrollable impetuosity of temper that I thus express myself—it is because I have for years past studied this question; I have looked it through, I was about to say, in its length and breadth, but that no mortal man has ever yet fathomed the depth of the wickedness of the Corn Laws; and it is because my convictions are strong, and my mind fully made up on this question, that I speak with a force and a freedom which becomes a man in earnest, upon a matter which he believes to be of momentous and vital importance to his country and his kind."

The whole assembly rose and cheered enthusiastically.

On the 29th of January a meeting was held in the Town Hall, Ashton. The tickets for the tea-party and meeting were first sold at one shilling each, but so great was the demand that, on the appointed day, ten shillings was given readily for a ticket. Mr. C. Hindley, M.P., presided, and Mr. J. Brotherton, M.P., was also one of the speakers. Mr. Bright illustrated the conduct of the monopolists by referring to the monkey, and showed the waste that the Corn Laws occasioned.

"Perhaps you have seen a zoological garden, and you might have taken notice of the monkeys there. Monkeys generally have a can of porridge each to feed from; but I ask you, did ever you see a monkey begin with his own can? never; he commences with solemn grimace, and stealthily winds his long arms over the shoulder of his fellow-monkey, slipping his fingers into the can that belongs to his neighbour, and commences licking the produce of his mischief with delight—this is protection, or robbery—by which dignity is supported. But the evil does not cease with this simple abstraction. The monkey does not put into his mouth all that he has abstracted from his neighbour's can; no inconsiderable portion drops by the way, and is wasted. Every monkey follows the same practice and robs his neighbour, so that none receives a benefit; whilst a large portion of their food is spilt on the ground from their fingers in its conveyance to their mouths. So it is with the advocates of the Corn Laws: like the monkeys, they are not content with their own—they are never at rest while they can take something from somebody else, and in the end they will all be losers."

For years the League found it difficult to accommodate the immense number of persons who were in the habit of attending their meetings in Manchester, hence a building was erected in St. Peter's Field, the site of the Peterloo massacre, and it was completed in January, 1843. The dimensions were 135 feet by 105, and the height of the walls 27 feet, and it was appropriately named "The Free Trade Hall." On the 30th of January the first great meeting took place within its walls, and although the hall is the largest in the kingdom, with the exception of the great feudal structure at Westminster, still it was crowded. 7,000 persons, it was calculated, were present. Mr. Mark Philips was in the chair. Dr. Bowring, M.P., first addressed the immense gathering; Mr. G. Wilson followed, reading the subscriptions towards the £50,000 fund, which

amounted to £40,460. Mr. Taylor, of London, was the next speaker, and then followed Mr. Alderman Brooks, Mr. John Bright, Mr. R. R. R. Moore, the Rev. Mr. Pearson, of Ebley, the Rev. Mr. Massie, and Col. Thompson. Before the meeting closed the fund was increased to £42,000.

On the 1st of February a banquet was held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, and 3,800 persons were present. Mr. Mark Philips, M.P., was in the chair. Mr. T. M. Gibson, Col. Thompson, Mr. Daniel O'Connell, M.P., Dr. Bowring, M.P., and Mr. W. Aldam, M.P., delivered addresses. The audience incessantly called upon Mr. Bright to speak to them, and upon rising at last he was lustily cheered. In referring to the number of people out of employment that had paraded the streets of the towns in procession, he said :—

“We have seen them worked up into frenzy—frenzy not arising from the love of violence, but from the impossibility of further endurance of suffering ; we have seen them in the possession of our towns ; we have had our property in their hands, our lives in their hands. (Hear, hear.) Neither military nor the police were of any use to put them down, inasmuch as both were wearied, so that they were almost impotent to resist what might be brought against them ; yet not one sixpence worth of damage was done in some of those towns, and if ever I cared for that population amongst whom I am living, since last August, I care more now for them. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I venerate that population. (Cheers.) I hold myself in some degree the representative of them. (Tremendous cheers.) And any man may who has any capital by which he employs any of them. I hold that man, as the representative of those whom he employs, is bound to use his influence to save them from the ruin which the blind and slavish aristocracy of this country are very rapidly bringing upon them.” (Cheers.)

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LEAGUE AND THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The Results of Various Resolutions—Lord Brougham's Attack on Mr. Bright, and the latter's Reply—A Meeting in the Strand—Cobden defended by Members of the League—Drury Lane Theatre Rented for Weekly Meetings—Bright at Bristol, Tiverton, Gloucester, and Cheltenham.

WHILE the agitation was rapidly gaining adherents throughout the country, the cause was making but slow progress in the House of Commons, for the landlords of the soil were formidable in the House in numbers, and they were blinded by their own apparent interest, mistaking immediate profit to themselves as the best means of promoting the general well-being, and they never hesitated to prevent the poor from buying their food in the cheapest market. Our advantages from position, from coal-mines, and from the industry, skill, and energy of the people, are so considerable that were it not for unwise laws England, for ages to come, might continue to be the great workshop and emporium of the world. There was nothing appalling in the situation, except the want of wisdom in the rulers and of sympathy for

"The lonely poor;
Search, for their worth, some gentle heart wrung-proof,
Meek, patient, kind, and, were its trials fewer,
Belike less happy—Stand no more aloof."

Sir Robert Peel stated in Parliament on the 3rd of February that his experience of the Corn Law had not been such as to induce him to propose farther changes at present. He had heard nothing to induce him to prefer a fixed duty to a sliding scale.

Lord Howick, on the 17th of February, 1843, moved for a committee on the commercial policy of the country. It was refused by a majority of 115.

On the 3rd of February a meeting of ministers of religion was held in the Manchester Town Hall, to consider the bearing of the Corn Laws upon the physical, moral, and religious condition of the people. The Rev. Dr. Burns was the chairman, and there were about 300 ministers present. In the evening a banquet was held in the Free Trade Hall, and Mr. John Brooks officiated as chairman. The speakers were Messrs. John Bright,

J. S. Buckingham, Torrens McCullagh, Rev. T. Spencer, W. F. C. Wright, and James Wilson.

On the morning of the 4th of February a meeting of deputies was held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Mr. G. Wilson was in the chair, and on the motion of Mr. John Bright it was decided "that the council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League forthwith adjourn, and that it shall summon a conference of deputies from the country at such times as it may deem expedient." In the evening a closely-packed meeting was held in the hall, at which were about 8,000 persons. Mr. Bright also addressed this meeting, having spoken for five successive evenings.

On the 13th February, 1843, Lord Howick moved for a committee of the whole House to consider the reference in the Queen's speech to the long-continued depression of the manufacturing industry. The debate was continued nightly until the 17th, when the motion was rejected by 306 to 191 votes. Mr. Cobden taunted the Ministers with being free traders only in the abstract. A scene followed, and Mr. Cobden told Sir Robert Peel that he held the Premier personally responsible for the lamentable and dangerous state of affairs. Sir R. Peel interpreted the remarks as an incentive to attacks upon his life. Mr. Cobden also commented on the attack made by Lord Brougham on the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League, characterising the language of his lordship as "the ebullition of an ill-regulated intellect rather than the offspring of a malicious spirit." Sir R. Peel rose in an excited state and accused Mr. Cobden of holding him individually and personally responsible for the distress of the country. He had said so before at the Conference of the Anti-Corn-Law League. "But," added Sir Robert Peel, while the House cheered, "be the consequence of these insinuations what they may—(a long burst of cheers)—never will I be influenced by menaces such as these—(another burst of cheers)—to hold language, or adopt a course which I consider in the slightest degree inconsistent with my public duty." (Cheers.) Mr. Cobden said he did not say "personally."—Sir Robert Peel: "You did—you did." Mr. Cobden had great difficulty to explain that what he meant was that the right hon. gentleman was responsible in virtue of his office. Sir R. Peel was highly indignant, and displayed an angry feeling, but "anger," it is said, "is like the waves of a troubled sea; when it is corrected with a gentle reply, as with a smooth strand, it retires, and leaves nothing behind but froth and shells—no permanent injury."

On the 15th of February Lord Brougham sent a letter to Mr. John Bright, complaining of an article in the "Anti-Bread-Tax Circular," which, he stated, contained audacious falsehoods concerning his conduct with respect to a deputation from the League.

Mr. John Bright, in the course of a long letter addressed from Rochdale, February 16th, replied :—

"Now it is somewhat strange that if thou art a sincere friend of the Corn Law Repeal, thou shouldest have chosen from the armour of the *Quarterly Review* the weapons wherewith to inflict this friendly wound upon the only existing body by whom the repeal of the Corn Law is likely to be brought about. We have enemies who attack us often enough, and bitterly enough, and we are not especially grateful to our professing friends when they throw at us slander of the *Quarterly* and the rest of its tribe. The allusion to the late riots is a direct insinuation against the League, worthy only of its bitterest foe, and it is well known that the agent of the Government did his utmost to implicate the League in those unhappy transactions; and it is as well known that he utterly and ridiculously failed. I need no great sagacity to tell who were the real cause of those outbreaks. If the people would die quietly, there would be a chance of 'preserving the famine law;' but happily they will not; and they who maintain that accursed law may and must take the responsibility of the dangers and evils which spring from it. In reflecting upon the ungenerous attack upon the League, I might refer thee to passages in thy own career. I have read thy speeches, admired and studied them; nay, I have almost venerated the man who spoke them. I find in them passages as fierce, and impetuous, and exciting as any I have read in the speeches of the League. I ask thee to look back; the past might be forgotten if they were not written. For myself, I have only to say that, were my words as a fiery bolt, they should not be withheld against the vast iniquity the League is pledged to exterminate. It is not my place to excuse or to justify what may appear in the circular; but I will say that if a man, whatever be his station in society, dare to launch his calumnies at the League, he will ever find me ready to repel his attacks. In this country there is no sacred enclosure from which a man may shoot his poisoned darts and be himself secure from attack. The League was pursuing its labours—labours acknowledged by thyself to be meritorious—when thou charged them with heavy sins—may I not say with atrocious crimes? And when they turn round and repel the charge, and say a few severe things upon thee, at least as true as what thou said'st of them, thou art ruffled, and denouncest the pains and penalties of the House of Lords against them. I wish thy speech had been unspoken, much more for thy sake than for that of the League. We have outgrown such unjust and absurd charges as it contains. We do not wish to make enemies; but we are too well assured of our duty, and the excellence of our object, to submit to attacks which no one can justify."

Lord Brougham replied :—

"It would be far better policy, and far more praiseworthy conduct, to separate yourself from such unworthy associates—I mean better policy for the cause. I beg to assure you that I impute no wrong motives to you, but I perceive that your mind is wholly inflamed with party spirit, and that you are thus prevented from exercising your calm judgment."

Mr. Bright answered this letter in scathing terms, and Lord Brougham discontinued his correspondence.

On the 22nd of February, a meeting of the friends and supporters of the National Anti-Corn-Law League was held in the assembly-room of the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand, London, in furtherance of the objects of the League. The room was not sufficiently large to accommodate all who sought

admittance. Mr. Hamer Stansfield, of Leeds, was the chairman. Mr. R. Cobden was the first speaker, and was followed by Mr. Bright.

"A year ago," said Mr. Bright, "he had been in the metropolis, and in that very room he had pointed out what was about to happen in the manufacturing districts. In July last he was, again in London as a member of the League, and there they had told the Government, and many members of Parliament, and the public in general, the fearful state of the country, and now he was come again to tell them that the country was no better than it was then; and if it was no better, it must be much worse, for there were no such things as stagnation in a nation's condition. (Hear, hear.) Last summer he had asked Sir Thomas Acland what he thought of the matter, and his reply was that he did not think that the Corn Laws should be maintained for ever. He asked Sir Thomas how long it would be before he supposed the Corn Laws would be given up, and Sir Thomas replied 'when the population should have increased to somewhat more than it was at present, in ten years perhaps the people might amount to three or four millions more, and then no science, no skill, no industry, applied to agriculture, would be capable of enabling it to supply a sufficiency of food for the country;' in short, he said 'that the Corn Laws would be repealed whenever the pressure became too strong.' (Cheers.) He asked Sir Thomas if the pressure was not strong enough then, when thousands were starving to death, but Sir Thomas's carriage was waiting at the door, and he could not wait any longer, and so they left him." (Laughter.)

Sir Thomas had evidently an elastic conscience, for his conduct said:—

"I see the right, and approve it too;
Condemn the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue."

A meeting was held in the Free Trade Hall, on the 23rd of February, to repudiate the charges made in the Legislature against the League, and more particularly against Mr. R. Cobden. It was calculated that 10,000 persons were present. Mr. G. Wilson was the chairman, and he informed those present that the meeting had been called for the purpose of repelling the unmanly attacks that had been made upon the character of its members, and especially upon that distinguished, most able, and unequalled champion of their cause, Mr. R. Cobden. The audience here cheered lustily, and waved their hats and handkerchiefs for several minutes. Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. Thomas Bazley, junr., Sir Thomas Potter, Mr. Benjamin Pearson, and Mr. Alderman Callender addressed the meeting.

"What are we to think of the majority of the representatives of the people, as they style themselves?" said Mr. Bright, who was the next speaker. "I confess that I feel sensations of deepest humility when I sit in the gallery of the House of Commons and look upon them. (Hear, hear.) I see them all conscience-stricken, and acknowledging, both in their looks and conduct, that they are guilty of supporting a law which they feel to be unjust. (Hear, hear.) But what shall we say of him who is the leader of that band of men who shrinks from the just responsibility which has been laid upon him? Did he not for ten years boast that he was building up a great party? Did he not cry 'register, register, register,' and did not his followers follow out that advice? and did they not at last force themselves into the councils of the Queen? (Cheers, and cries: 'They did.') . . . I believe Mr. Cobden to be a very intelligent and honest man; I believe that he will act with a single eye to the good of his country; I believe that he is firmly convinced of the

truth of the great principle of which he is so distinguished an advocate; and surrounded as he is by men as enthusiastic as himself and as anxious that these measures should be carried out, and seconded by the thousands which I see in this hall—and the seven or eight thousand here are but the representatives of the millions without these walls—I cannot suppose that the triumph of those principles is far distant; and when it is accomplished, for whatever we may have done, for whatever sacrifices we may have made, I believe we shall be amply repaid in the marvellous change which, in a few years, will take place in the moral aspect of the country.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright concluded by moving an address to Mr. R. Cobden. Mr. William Rawson seconded the motion. The Rev. C. Baker, of Stockport, Mr. Alderman Brooks, and Mr. Morris spoke in its favour, and the meeting carried the motion unanimously.

On the 16th of March, Mr. Bright and Colonel Thompson visited the ancient city of Bristol, “the mistress of the Severn sea,” with its streets of masts, “and pennants from all nations of the earth.” On the evening of that date a *soirée* was held in the Public Rooms, Broadmead. The gathering was large and enthusiastic. Two years previous to that date Mr. Bright had addressed the inhabitants on the same subject.

The members of the League finding they could not obtain a room in London sufficiently large to accommodate their meetings, rented Drury Lane Theatre in which to hold their weekly meetings for a time. On the 20th of March the first weekly meeting was held in this theatre. Mr. G. Wilson occupied the chair. Mr. Ewart, Mr. R. Cobden, and Mr. John Bright were the speakers. In the course of a lengthy speech, Mr. Bright said:—

“What was the state of the population of this country? It was so bad that when he had been abroad he had been ashamed to acknowledge that he was an Englishman. It was said of the celebrated writer, Mr. Dickens, that he had described low life so well that he must have lived in a workhouse. The reply was that he had lived in England, which was one great workhouse. (Hear, hear.) The country was filled with paupers, and we were now devouring each other. In Leeds there were 40,000 persons subsisting on charity. A friend of his was then in the room who told him that in Sheffield there were no less than 12,000 paupers, and that there were as many more who were as badly off as paupers. (A voice: ‘Worse.’) These towns were desolated, and did they think that when the manufacturing districts were involved in ruin that London could be safe? Are the labouring population of Dorsetshire any better than others? Why, every man was a pauper, and the number was not diminishing. The return from which he had quoted was made two years ago, and since then the number of paupers had increased.”

Mr. Bright and Colonel Thompson next day went down to the pleasantly-situated town of Tiverton. They spoke at a meeting in the Theatre. Amongst the large audience there was a number of farmers, who responded most heartily to the sentiments of the speakers. Mr. Tatley, the mayor, a landed proprietor, officiated as chairman. From Tiverton they went to

Barnstaple, which is situated in a broad and fertile vale on the eastern bank of the river Taw, and on the 22nd of March they addressed a meeting in the Guildhall, which was crowded. The day after, they presented themselves at Exeter, a city which "takes homage from the gazing hills around." A meeting was held at the Royal Subscription Rooms, and the large audience applauded the sentiments expressed by both speakers.

On the 24th of March they were in the city of Gloucester, where George Whitfield, and Raikes the establisher of Sunday-schools, first saw the light. The Shire-hall was the place of meeting, and the workpeople present were chiefly those employed in the manufacture of shawls, pin-making, bell manufacture, and edge tools, and there were also a few farmers and agricultural labourers, who cultivated the fertile plain surrounding this city.

Cheltenham, with its fine fruitful vale, sheltered by the immense amphitheatre formed by the Cotswold hills, was next visited by Mr. Bright on the 25th of March, and he delivered a speech to the inhabitants.

CHAPTER XV.

BRIGHT'S FIRST ELECTION CONTEST IN DURHAM.

Bright at Taunton—Discussing with a Clergyman at Davenport—Journey to Liskeard, Manchester, and Plymouth—Bright suggested as a Candidate for Sheffield—Bright on Phonography—The old Reporting System—Bright at the Weekly London Meeting, and a Gathering of London Merchants and Bankers—Visit to Macclesfield, High Wycombe, Dorset, Lincoln, Huntingdon, and Norwich.

EARLY in April (1843), when spring had “put a spirit of youth in everything,” Mr. Bright took a run down to Nottingham, to give friendly assistance to a Free Trader who had offered himself as a candidate for a vacant seat in Parliament for that town; and while there he received intelligence that an election was about to take place at Durham, and that if a Free Trade candidate was brought forward the probability was that the majority of the electors would record their votes in his favour. Mr. Bright thus described the event at a public meeting in London afterwards:—

“He (Mr. Bright) went to Durham, not with the remotest intention of becoming a candidate himself, but for the purpose of supporting any person as a candidate who might be in the field, and who was favourable to the views held by the members of the League. However, from some indecision amongst the Liberals and Free Trade electors, there was no one in the neighbourhood who seemed likely to unite the suffrages of all the friends of Free Trade so as to insure success. There were many excellent friends in the League who strongly advised him to stand; some very intelligent, sober-minded, well-informed men believed there was a good chance of success, and all of them were of opinion that they could fight a very respectable battle. He was in a difficulty, and did not know how to proceed. It was impossible that he could have any advice from those with whom he usually acted, the election being fixed for so early a day. He proceeded therefore to issue an address to the electors, which was posted on the walls of the city of Durham early on the Monday morning, and at eight o'clock the same morning he and his friends began to canvass, and they canvassed until eleven, when the nomination took place. It was said that nearly every elector in the city was present at the nomination, and at the conclusion, when the show of hands was taken, there were about fifteen hands, certainly not more than twenty, held up for his opponent (Lord Dungannon), and apparently every other hand in that vast assembly was held up in his (Bright's) favour. Now that was a fair election for the city of Durham. It was an election as good as they would have had if they had had the ballot. These men held up their hands in the crowd, and none could tell whose they were. Had they voted as they had held up their hands, there could be no doubt that probably not fifty electors in that city would have recorded their votes for his opponent. Now when they considered that Durham was a cathedral city, and that the proposer of his opponent was a gentleman of very high character, of extraordinary ability, and of very great influence; when they considered moreover that the Marquis of Londonderry had an enormous, and he would say a most unconstitutional, interest in that borough; that he had for many years maintained and employed a large number of the freemen of the city of Durham, it was said (and no one doubted it), for the express purpose of exerting influence in the election of members for the city; when it was

considered that on this occasion the Marquis of Londonderry was able to poll not fewer than from eighty to one hundred freemen as certainly as if he could go and write his name in the poll book and put a hundred votes opposite it; if, in addition to this, it was remembered that his opponent had on former occasions represented the city, and that notwithstanding all this, he (Mr. Bright) had polled more votes than any Liberal candidate had polled before in the city of Durham since the passing of the Reform Bill; that he had polled 406 against his opponent's 507; and that a great number of those who voted for his opponent professed themselves to be Free Traders, and had only engaged to support him because, as they stated, they felt confident that no opponent of his would be in the field; when, further, it was remembered that the whole expenses he (Mr. Bright) had incurred did not exceed £50 or £60, and that not a farthing had been expended for drink, not a farthing in bribes, not a farthing which he could not expose to his opponent, or any other person; he did think that, considering all these things, the result was not to be considered in the light of a defeat, but as affording hope of a not very distant triumph."

Mr. Prebendary Townsend was the gentleman who had nominated Lord Dungannon at the Durham election, and Mr. Bright, in addressing the electors, said :—

"You are aware that under the Tithe Commutation Act the revenues of the clergy, in tithe, are increased in amount according as food rises in price, and fall in amount as food falls in price; that an average is taken every seven years, and that upon that seven years' average the tithe rent charge is fixed. . . . Now, I repeat that I do not blame the clergy for this. It is a misfortune for which they are not to be accounted guilty, but still I hold it is a most unhappy circumstance that any body of men holding their position in society—assuming sacred functions—professing themselves the ministers of the purest system of morality and religion ever taught upon earth—men who call upon you to leave the grovelling things of earth, and all the miserable dross and tinsel by which you are surrounded—to direct your thoughts to higher and holier objects—to carry your aspirations towards heaven rather than stoop to the things below—I say it is a misfortune that by a law made by the Parliament of this country this body of men, especially appointed to take charge of the flock, should, instead of being the shepherds, appear to all men's eyes as the shearers of the flock—(great cheering)—and that their enormous influence should, in almost all the parishes of England, be bound up in the conservation of the most odious, the most unjust, the most oppressive, and the most destructive enactment which was ever recorded upon the statute-book of this or any other country." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, on the morning of the 8th of April, arrived at Taunton, a town of great antiquity, situated in the vale of Taunton Dean, which is proverbial for the fertility of its soil and its temperate climate. The distinguished members of the League were met at the station by a band and hundreds of admirers, and were escorted to the Assize Hall, which was soon crowded by 1,500 persons. There was a large number of farmers present. Mr. Cobden, on rising, was received with cool respect, and it was plainly visible upon their faces that the audience was doubtful. Every remark was well weighed, and gradually the icy-coldness and suspicion pictured on the upturned faces disappeared as Cobden unfolded his subject. At last his statements were confirmed by a timid "hear, hear;" but these expressions grew robust, and were ultimately uttered with strong emphasis. Mr. Bright next rose, and he drove the facts home

so well that enthusiasm pervaded the meeting and found vent in cheers, and at last the audience seemed to be thoroughly in favour of the principles of the League.

Mr. Bright next, accompanied by Mr. Moore, went on to Davenport, and there, at a meeting of the inhabitants, a clergyman opposed them. Mr. Bright thus alludes to the event:—

“He was not fond of such discussions, because he had found that men who had attended them were generally more occupied in getting up arguments in favour of their own theories than endeavouring to discover the truth in those of their opponents. The Conservative Association’s champion was not engaged in commercial matters, but was a clergyman of the Established Church, and still did not feel it out of the line of his sacred duties to step forward on this question. The exhibition was altogether highly amusing. For two hours did this gentleman hold forth in favour of scarcity by law. He propounded doctrines which were altogether new, he argued that scarcity did not cause distress; and the reply made to him in answer to his views was, that if that were so he had no need to fear the repeal of the Corn Laws, for that abundance would not cause cheapness. The men who went there prepared to vote in favour of the Corn Laws voted against them, and not more than one in fifty held up their hands in favour of the Corn Laws.”

The next meeting attended by Mr. Bright was at the Guildhall, Liskeard, when seven hundred of the inhabitants of the Eastern Division of Cornwall listened to him. The pleasant town of Wakefield was reached by him on the 21st of April, and at a meeting in the Music Hall saloon he said:—

“I might draw a sad picture of the suffering of millions of your countrymen. I might tell you of blighted hopes and ruined prospects. I might take you to desolate homes of multitudes whom the Corn Laws have cursed with unutterable wretchedness. I might point you to the calamities which overhang our blessed but afflicted country, and implore you to help us in the great and arduous struggle. (Cheers.) The League claims your help with the utmost confidence that you will not be found wanting; may I yet, as its representative, here call upon you to arouse yourselves? I ask it on no grounds of personal interest, for to you the matter is as deeply momentous as to me, and conscious of your responsibility I ask you for the sake of millions upon whose neck is the iron heel of monopoly; I demand it by the memory of those whom a law-made famine has destroyed. And trusting in the sympathy of our common nature, I know that I do not call upon you in vain.”

The audience here rose and cheered lustily.

About 4,000 persons assembled in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on the evening of the 18th of April, to pay a tribute of respect to Mr. R. Cobden. Mr. Alderman Brooks presided. Messrs. R. R. R. Moore, Edward W. Watkin, and Joseph Brotherton, M.P., addressed the meeting. Mr. Robert Niel, a working man, presented to Mr. R. Cobden an address bearing 11,372 signatures of residents of Manchester and neighbourhood. Mr. R. Cobden responded. Mr. Lawrence Heyworth, Mr. Thomas Bazley, and Mr. John Bright delivered speeches.

“We go here and there,” said Mr. Bright, “determined to engage with our opponents, but no combatants can we find. Occasionally they come to our meetings and commence taking notes very vigorously, but they generally give it up

in despair, and when you turn your eye to the spot, expecting an antagonist, lo! you find that he has vanished—(laughter)—not perhaps into thin air, for they are sometimes pretty bulky, but into open air, being very faint.” (Laughter.)

On the 24th of April, Mr. Bright arrived at Plymouth, from the shores of which sailed the “May Flower” 235 years previously, conveying the “Pilgrim Fathers” to the New World. About 1,500 of the inhabitants of this seaport assembled in the Theatre to listen to Mr. Bright, who met with an enthusiastic reception.

In May, 1843, it was rumoured that Mr. Ward, one of the representatives of Sheffield, who was the successor of Mr. J. S. Buckingham, was likely to retire to private life, and Mr. Bright was mentioned in a leader in the *Sheffield Independent* newspaper as a suitable candidate. “Mr. Bright’s services in the agitation of the League,” it went on to state, “have been most valuable. He has these further qualifications, that, being perfectly conversant with trade, he is on that account the more suitable member for a manufacturing town, and he would be found decided in the defence of those civil and religious liberties which are now threatened with invasion.”

During this year (1843), Mr. Joseph Pitman delivered a lecture on Phonography in the Theatre, Toad Lane, Rochdale. Mr. John Bright, being the chairman, remarked:—

“I have no hesitation in saying that I am greatly astonished at what I have seen to-night. Two years ago I read an account of a lecture on phonography in a York newspaper, but could make nothing of it. I thought it was entirely visionary. I think no person can have been at this lecture without being convinced that all that has been promised by this art can easily be performed; and that it is so exceedingly simple as to be easily learned by everyone of ordinary capacity; and if it be learned by a very large number of the people, the public benefits to be derived from it are entirely incalculable. It may be said also that to make it very valuable it is necessary that great multitudes should learn it. Shorthands are of very little use if they are only known to a select few, for men are not writing always to the same persons, and if ever it is to come into general use it must, I think, be by very large multitudes learning it; and I see no reason why in this town we should not have a class of four or five hundred or more. If five hundred knew it well, and used it, many thousands would be forced to learn and practice it from necessity. In this age, when we are talking so much about education—when we ought to be doing so much more than we are—this art appears to me likely to tend to increase the love of reading and writing and of education generally; and it seems to have sprung up at a time when, like many other improvements, it was most needed, and when, in all probability, it will be seized upon with the greatest avidity. I may say for myself that I am extremely obliged personally to the inventor and to his brother, who has come amongst us and given us these lectures. I shall be glad if this town, which on many occasions has stood foremost amongst the towns of Lancashire on some other questions, should not be behind in one so important as this.”

Although Mr. Bright at that period of his public career had a foresight of the great usefulness of phonography, he had no idea that it would be so greatly employed in recording his public utterances, and we may add that during his life he has seen

more reporters congregated together than any other public man, for it has been no uncommon circumstance for fifty or sixty to attend public meetings when it has been known that he would be present. From an early period, it has been the ambition of phonographers to record his speeches on account of his celebrity, and he is one amongst the few who can be reported verbatim, as he speaks so grammatically that it is not necessary to alter a single word, for his "accents flow with artless ease." His statements are clear, and in vigorous language, and invariably cast in a simple and single mould. Up to the year 1849, Mr. Bright thought that the Manchester reporters transcribed his speeches with greater accuracy than the Parliamentary reporters, for in that year he said to Mr. Stokes, the then correspondent of the London *Daily News*, who was stationed in Manchester: "I always find that I am reported much more correctly in Manchester than in London." This might arise from the habit in the "gallery" in those days of partially ignoring stenography, and condensing the speaker's words in a style less pleasing to himself than to the reporter. Even prior to the year 1844 the London daily press showed the importance of printing Bright's and Cobden's speeches the day after the delivery; for reporters attended the meetings in Manchester. Sometimes these meetings were held at three o'clock in the afternoon, and at half-past four the reporters would drive to the railway station, and as the rolling and swaying express or "special" train travelled to the metropolis they transcribed their notes during the five hours' journey, and after another drive through London streets to the newspaper offices they continued copying for three hours more, winding up with a correction of proofs—twelve hours of almost incessant skilled work, with only the briefest pauses for refreshments. On these occasions it was customary for one or two reporters to represent each paper, and the lengthy reports of Bright's and Cobden's speeches that appeared in each paper were somewhat marvellous. But of course since that date great changes have taken place in furnishing newspapers at a distance with reports. The telegraph has gradually superseded the "special engine," as a means of express reporting, and, more than all, the increased necessity of early publication compels the work to be subdivided amongst half-a-dozen hands, and finished in two or three hours, which formerly was given to one or two reporters to finish in twelve hours.

The weekly meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League was held at Drury Lane Theatre on the 26th of April, and, notwithstanding the attractions of the holiday season at that time of the

year, the building was crowded, and a large number of persons were unable to gain admittance. Mr. George Wilson was the chairman. The Rev. Thomas Spencer and Mr. Ewart spoke on the subject of the Corn Laws. Mr. J. Bright followed, remarking:—

“He found from statistics, which he believed could be relied upon, that up to the year 1820 the average duration of human life had been progressively and constantly increasing, but from 1820 up to 1843 it had been diminishing. If there were no figures to disprove this, and there was no doubt that the present more perfect system of registration would place the fact in even a more striking light before them, still it would be easy to understand that such a state of things must ensue from a law which diminished the supply of food to the people, pressing a great portion of them constantly down to deeper and deeper suffering, and contracting their means of subsistence, while their numbers were decreasing. (Cheers.) Amongst what class did this shortening of life take place? Was it amongst the octogenarian peers of whom they were told? (Voices: ‘No.’) Did they go to their graves any sooner? (Voices: ‘No, no.’) Was it amongst the middle classes? Some of them doubtless had suffered much during the last five years from the failing trade and declining prosperity of the country, but by far the greater part of the early deaths inflicted by the Corn Laws fell upon the poorest class. (Hear, hear.) It had been proved from accurate reports that in some districts of Manchester and Leeds 570 children out of 1,000 who were born died before they were five years of age. Amongst the aristocracy and persons of comfortable circumstances, about 70 out of 1,000 died before reaching that age, and here there were 500 children born to life and happiness, born to give comfort to their parents, and strength, power, and prosperity to the country, swept to an untimely grave by causes in no small degree to be attributed to the operation of these oppressive laws. (Cries of ‘Shame.’) If there was anything more appalling than this it was not in his imagination to conceive. (Cheers.) If in Leeds and Manchester there was this terrible destruction of population, what was the case in Ireland? There the population increased at a much slower rate, because there was a much larger portion steeped in the deepest poverty, and the destruction of human life went on more rapidly. All who had travelled in the south and south-west of Ireland knew what was the terrible condition of the peasantry. There in London their appearance might be less familiar to the inhabitants, but he (Mr. Bright) knew that when they came over to Liverpool to procure work at the harvest in the north of England they seemed scarcely men. Persons not more than twenty-five years or thirty years of age appeared poor decrepit creatures, as old as others at sixty or seventy. How could it be otherwise? They were born in the greatest possible degree of wretchedness; they had never had enough of good and substantial diet, nor even enough of the poor diet on which they subsisted. They had never been well clothed or sheltered: they had no sunshine in their hearts, and grew up to be stunted and dwarfish and miserable. . . . He had been in the town of Sheffield last week: it was one of the towns which had not done all its duty. He had been present at a meeting where 1,000 or 1,200 were assembled in the Music Hall. He had spoken to them with a severity which they might have resented had it not been deserved. He had told them that they were unworthy of commercial freedom, and restoration of their prosperity, so long as they slumbered for weeks or months without having a meeting against the corn law. There was not a more ingenious or intellectual population than that of Sheffield in the world, and yet their manufactures were brought to a stoppage. They saw thousands of the ingenious artisans of the town employed in wheeling earth on the roads for the miserable pittance which is doled out to them from the poor rates. Seven or eight years ago not one in a thousand of the population of Sheffield was a pauper, but now the proportion was one in nine.” (Cries of “Shame.”)

On the first of May, the favourite month of the year, when “each hedge is covered thick with green,” a time associated with the Maypole and laughing, romping children, and unreflecting joy, Mr. Bright was compelled to be at the manufacturing town

of Macclesfield, at a meeting in the School Room in Feul Street, to speak on behalf of cheap bread for the people, whose condition betokened the contrary to happiness.

The merchants, bankers, and citizens of London, held a meeting in the Hall of Commerce, Threadneedle Street, London, on the 8th of May, to consider the question of the Corn Laws. The spacious hall was crowded, Mr. G. Wilson in the chair. Mr. John Bright was the first speaker, and Mr. Richard Cobden followed. When the chairman took the sense of the meeting as to whether it was altogether favourable or not to the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws, the vast assembly rose as one man, with the cry of "all," and the enthusiasm that prevailed was perfectly indescribable.

A meeting of deputies from various parts of the country commenced on the 9th of May, in Herbert's Hotel, Palace Yard, London. Mr. P. A. Taylor was the chairman, Mr. John Bright was the first speaker, and was followed by Mr. Smith of Sheffield, and Colonel Thompson. The conference was continued the next day, and addresses were delivered by Mr. Johnson, of Derby, Mr. Plunt, of Leeds, Mr. Dixon, of Carlisle, and Mr. Scott, of Montrose. The conference was prolonged for several days and was again addressed by Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and other gentlemen.

On the 11th of May a meeting was held at the pretty town of High Wycombe, and Mr. R. Lucas was the chairman. Mr. John Bright spoke for an hour and a-half.

On the 13th of May Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore went down to Dorset. A meeting was held in a field called Salisbury Field close to the town, and about 3,000 persons were present, about 1,000 of whom were farmers. Mr. Henry Barrand Farnall was voted chairman. Mr. Bright addressed the gathering for an hour and a-half, and he was frequently cheered. The meeting was commenced at three o'clock in the afternoon, and lasted until half-past seven in the evening, and the resolution against the Corn Laws was carried, only about 200 hands being held up against it. Mr. Bright afterwards spent three hours at the King's Arms, Dorset, with about forty farmers, with whom he had a long conversation. He was at the populous watering-place of Weymouth on the 16th of May, and in a large room called Burdon's Store he addressed the inhabitants. It was stated that it was the largest meeting that had been held ever since the days of the Reform Bill.

A few days after Mr. Bright was back again in London, and on the 18th of May a second meeting of bankers, merchants,

and the traders of the city was held in the Hall of Commerce, which was crowded. Mr. G. Wilson was again in the chair, Mr. Villiers was present this time and was the first speaker, Mr. Ward, M.P., followed, and then came Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore.

On the 19th of May, Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden went through the "wide vale of Trent," and visited the quiet city of Lincoln, and a meeting was held in Shepherd Square. It was the annual hiring day of servants and agricultural labourers, and the assemblage was composed of about 300 persons, chiefly farmers, agricultural labourers, and the quiet citizens. Mr. Hitchen was the chairman. Mr. Bright was the first to speak, and Mr. Cobden followed. The audience at first seemed very reserved, but they warmed into enthusiasm as the speakers unravelled their views on the question, and at the conclusion it was evident which way the judgment of the audience was leaning. A motion having been submitted in favour of abolishing the Corn Laws, an amendment was proposed by Mr. Moore, of Redburn, a farmer, in favour of Protection; the result was that five-sixths of those present voted for the original motion.

On the 17th of June a meeting was held on the common at Huntingdon, and about 3,000 persons were present, a large number of them being farmers and neighbouring squires. Mr. Cobden had promised to be present, but as he was unwell at the time, Mr. Bright took the train from Manchester to speak instead of his absent friend. Mr. Burt was the chairman, and it was well known by Mr. Bright that that district was the hotbed of Protectionists, but he spoke out in scathing terms, and was well supported by Mr. R. R. R. Moore. The show of hands was declared by the chairman to be in favour of protection, and so the meeting ended.

The city of Norwich, long famous for its woollen, worsted, and silk manufactures, and in more modern times for its iron and brass foundries, breweries, snuff mills, mustard mills, and corn mills, was reached on the 30th of June by Mr. Bright, and he stated to the audience that assembled in St. Andrew's Hall to listen to him, "that it was with shame that he stood forward—he would not say for how many times—perhaps for the five-hundredth time, to speak on this question. He was ashamed of his fellow-countrymen who, for twenty-eight years, had permitted on the statute book a law so unnatural and so inhuman as the Corn Law was described to be."

The day following Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore spoke to a number of farmers in the same hall, who listened with attention, and applauded.

CHAPTER XVI.

BRIGHT'S SECOND ELECTION CONTEST AT DURHAM.

Petitions Presented against the Return of Lord Dugannon—Bright Threatened at Alnwick—The Result of the Inquiry into the Durham Election—Bright's Address to the Electors, and Canvass of the Town—The Scene at the Nomination—The Election—Immense Meeting in the Market-Place—The Declaration of the Poll—Mr. Bright Chaired—Congratulatory Addresses from all parts of the Country.

Soon after the Durham election it was discovered that Mr. Bright's opponent had been returned by bribery, and petitions were presented against Lord Dugannon's return. On the 4th of July Mr. Bright issued an address to the electors of Durham, in which he stated :—

“ At the last election you had to choose between two candidates—the one representing monopoly in the shape of dear bread, dear sugar, dear coffee, and low wages for a great deal of work, with great difficulty in getting work at all ; the other being the advocate of natural and fair prices for bread, sugar, and coffee—for free trade, by which the employment would be abundant, and for good wages for the multitude, which can only be had when employment is abundant. The free-trader promises no head money ; he never said to you of himself, or through his agent, ‘ You may as well have your sovereign. Vote for me.’ The monopolist had a majority of votes, and was declared your representative. He shows his respect for you by paying you for your support for him. You favour him with your votes ; he repays the favour in gold. Will you wonder if he should regard the representation of Durham as for his benefit and exaltation rather than yours ? He votes for monopoly in your name. Your voice in Parliament through him is given for refusing votes to your fellow-countrymen, who are complaining of being neglected and oppressed by the Government. . . . Are they your friends who make laws which have well-nigh destroyed the once flourishing trade of the Tyne and the Wear ; which have laid up your ships to rot, and have caused your ingenious and industrious operatives to be without employment, without wages, and even without food ? Freemen of Durham, are you men ? Have you the heads and hearts of men ? Have you families, wives, and children, and will you labour for the insatiable monopolists ? Have you suffered, have you seen the suffering of others ? have you read of the starvation which monopoly, which the accursed Corn Law has inflicted upon multitudes of your countrymen ? You have felt, you have seen, you have heard of this ! I charge you, then, to raise your voice, and to give your votes in favour of justice and free trade, and to spurn from you the men who would ask you to barter your power to do good for yourselves, your families, and your countrymen, for the paltry sum of 5s. a year. You have the power now to save your borough ; you can restore it to purity and usefulness to your country ; you can prove that in all that has hitherto taken place, you have been ‘ more sinned against than sinning.’ The rich may be base enough to tempt you. May you teach them that honour, virtue, and independence reside with the people.”

On the 6th of July Mr. Bright was at a meeting in the Corn Exchange, Winchester, and 1,400 of the inhabitants were present. The day following an open-air meeting was held near the Corn Exchange, and about 2,000 residents listened to his speech,

amongst whom were many farmers. Mr. Robert Owen, the founder of Socialism, interrupted the meeting by trying to graft on to the subject of Free-trade, his pet scheme—a new state of society. The meeting, however, refused to receive his extraneous matter, and Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, who also spoke, were applauded. The indifference exhibited towards Bright and Cobden at first by the inhabitants of this district changed into the warmest affection, their distrust into confidence and assurance, and their timidity into courage and ardour.

Mr. Bright was accompanied by Mr. A. Prentice to the beautifully-situated town of Kelso, on the 7th of July, and they addressed the inhabitants in the Secession Church.

Early in July the Free-traders of Alnwick invited Mr. Bright to attend a meeting in their town, which they fixed for the 8th of that month. The *Newcastle Journal*, which had been established under the immediate auspices of the Duke of Northumberland and Mr. Matthew Bell, the Conservative member for South Northumberland, became wroth, and thus counselled its readers on the 1st of July:—"It is stated that Mr. Bright, the Anti-Corn-Law agitator, is expected to visit the wool fair, which will be held at Alnwick shortly, in order to scatter the seeds of disaffection in that quarter. Should he make his appearance, which is not improbable, it is to be hoped there may be found some stalwart yeomen to treat the disaffected vagabond as he deserves."

The meeting was held on the day appointed in Alnwick Town Hall, and so crowded was the building that a large number of persons could not gain admittance. The district farmers had turned up at the meeting in large numbers. Mr. Durling, of Helton, was the chairman. Mr. Bright, undaunted, appeared in their midst, and his speech produced a powerful effect on the audience, for their countenances indicated the working of their feelings. At his words a calm came over every face, and all was hushed. "The stalwart yeomen," instead of being wroth, were spell-bound, and at last, instead of giving vent to discordant sound, lustily cheered, for they found he was truly a man of the people. His origin tranquillised his auditors, his eloquence carried them away, and his honesty and moral earnestness won for him their sympathy and respect. The physical classes ever look with double confidence upon a leader who represents in his own person the qualities upon which they rely. In his face he has been equally fortunate; it is extremely comely. The features are at once soft and manly; the glow of health and sanguine temperament is diffused over the whole

countenance, which is national in the outline, and beaming with national emotion. The open expression is confiding and inviting, and the bright blue eyes the most kindly and honest-looking that can be conceived.

On the 10th of July a meeting was held in the lecture-room, Nelson Street, Newcastle, and 1,200 persons were present. Mr. T. M. Greenhow occupied the chair.

"He had been lately at Kelso," said Mr. Bright in the course of his speech on this occasion, "and there also he learnt there were many who could not obtain employment, by means of which to gain subsistence, and the same state of things was to be seen almost in every place they could turn to; and all this was effected by the spirit of monopoly falling upon them, not like the dew of heaven, but operating as the means of preventing them obtaining food and clothing for themselves and their families, and education for their children; and all this fearfully increasing for the last five years. . . . He had no idea of the maintenance of Kings, Lords, and Commons unless they were of some use to the country, and rendered some return for the expense they cost the country; but people had themselves to blame for what the aristocracy had become. They had spoiled them by the vilest, the meanest worship. They had praised them for their fine, small, white hands, their finely-formed ears, their noble, intellectual foreheads, and spoke of them otherwise as if they were altogether above the common run of God's creatures. They had poured this incense upon them until the aristocracy almost believed themselves what they were called. The people had knelt to them as spaniels, and as spaniels had been treated in return."

Nearly all of the electors of the seaport town of North Shields crowded the assembly rooms of that borough on the 11th of July to listen to Mr. Bright, and a number of the inhabitants of Tynemouth were also present.

On the 12th of July a meeting was held in the Polytechnic Hall, in the Athenæum, Sunderland. Mr. Andrew White, the mayor, presided. Mr. Bright's speech was lengthy, and he said:—

"I lately met four Irishmen between Rochdale and Manchester, and they are the only four Irish harvesters I have seen this year, although our roads used to be crowded with them in former years. I almost shuddered to look at them—men so habited never were seen before; our ancestors who covered themselves with skins or painted their bodies were little worse off than these men. Their countenances bespoke the extent of starvation they endured; their limbs were shrunk—they were not men, but skeletons walking abroad, exciting the pity of the people. It is a notorious fact that these men are old at thirty and thirty-five, and such a population is not to be found in any country in Europe." (Hear, hear.)

The committee appointed to inquire into the merits of the Durham election petition commenced their inquiry in the House of Commons on the 12th day of July. Lord Ashley was the chairman. The counsel for the petitioners were Mr. Cockburn, Mr. Serjeant Wrangham, and Mr. Wordsworth; and for the sitting member, Mr. Austin and Mr. Kingslake. Mr. Cockburn informed the committee that there were two petitions; one containing, in the usual form, a general allegation of bribery, and the other setting forth in addition to the general

allegation, that Lord Dungannon was by himself and his agents guilty of bribery and corrupt practices. That the bribery took place on the 8th and 9th of May, in consequence of corrupt arrangements entered into previous to the election. The constituency consisted of 1,100 persons, and making allowance for seven double entries, and forty-five persons who were either dead or had become disqualified, the actual constituency amounted to 1,054. Of this number 600 were freemen, and 454 householders. The freemen were persons of humble condition, and were peculiarly open to the species of corruption which was practised upon them on this and former occasions. A practice prevailed in Durham of paying head-money. This was the kind of bribery adopted in the present instance. The committee, after two days' inquiry, declared that the election of Lord Dungannon to serve in Parliament was void; that he had been guilty of bribery through his agents, by payment of sums of money to a large number of electors, but that Lord Dungannon had not been cognisant of the acts of his agents.

Mr. Bright was prevailed upon to offer himself again as a candidate, for it had become a general conclusion that as he belonged to the commercial class, and had a clear head and ready tongue, he would be a most valuable acquisition to the Free-trade ranks in the House of Commons.

Mr. Villiers states in a letter to the author of this work, that he was consulted by Mr. Cobden as to the advisability of Mr. Bright at that time becoming a member of Parliament, and that Mr. Cobden expressed himself as strongly of opinion that Mr. Bright would, "from his peculiar and effective style of speaking at public meetings, do the cause more good by remaining out than by entering Parliament. This, however, was not my (Mr Villiers's) own opinion, for I thought that Mr. Bright's plain and hard hitting way of speaking was as much required there as elsewhere—an opinion, I need not say, that was fully confirmed, for I believe nobody can realise in these days the amount of feeling and animosity that was excited by the Anti-Corn-Law agitation, and the ferocity—of this spirit—in the House in which the change was opposed, not only by the proprietary classes, but by all those who socially and politically were in sympathy with them. I am afraid it must be admitted that but for the enormous funds contributed to support the agitation, and the famine in Ireland, some years would have elapsed before our object would have been attained."

Mr. Bright issued his Address to the Durham electors on the 15th of July, 1843, and arrived at Durham on the 17th of July,

and commenced an active canvass, in which he was accompanied by several resident gentlemen. He was opposed by Mr. Purvis, Queen's counsel, who was supported by the Conservative ministry. On the evening of the 17th of July, Mr. Bright addressed the electors from the window of the City Tavern, and about 5,000 of the citizens assembled in the market-place to listen to him. Mr. John Henderson was the chairman.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Bright, "you will indulge me if I am not heard very distinctly, for I have been so hard-worked during the last fortnight that I find it almost impossible to speak, I am so hoarse. . . . I am the political friend of the working classes, and of the freemen of this borough. I have not a sympathy in common with any lord in this neighbourhood. I have not a single wish for the great exaltation, or the great riches or enriching of any nobleman or squire. I have an unchanging sympathy with those who form the largest portion of my countrymen, and the largest portion of this numerous meeting, whose only property, I repeat, is their labour, and whose only income is their wages. (Cheers.) I am a working man as much as you. My father was as poor as any man in the crowd; he was of your own body entirely. He boasts not—nor do I—of birth, nor of great family distinction. What he has made he has made by his own industry and successful commerce. What I have come from him, and from my own exertions. I have no interest in the extravagance of government; I have no interest in receiving appointments under any government; I have no interest in pandering to the views of any government; I have nothing to gain by being the tool of any party. (Cheers.) I come here before you as the friend of my own class and order (cheers), as one of the people; as one who would, on all occasions, be the firm defender of all your rights, and asserter of all those privileges to which you are justly entitled." (Cheers.)

Mr. R. R. R. Moore also addressed the electors on behalf of his friend, Mr. Bright.

As the weather was wet on the 19th of July, Mr. Bright addressed a number of the electors at the City Tavern. On the evening of the 21st of July he again spoke to a large number of the electors, and it was evident that he was becoming a great favourite amongst them.

On Saturday evening, July 22nd, he delivered a speech from the balcony of Thwait's Waterloo Hotel to the country people. "His speech lacked none of the spirit, point, and strength for which his orations have been so remarkably distinguished," wrote a correspondent who was present.

The following Monday, the 23rd of July, was the day of nomination. The hustings were erected in front of the Town Hall. At ten o'clock in the morning Mr. Bright met his friends at Thwait's Hotel, and they accompanied him to the Town Hall at half-past ten. As he entered the hall, he was heartily cheered, and the cheering was re-echoed by the immense crowd that was gathered outside. At a quarter to eleven Mr. Purvis, escorted by a band of music and a rather meagre number of friends, arrived, but his reception was not complimentary. - At the hour appointed—eleven o'clock—the mayor, Mr. Robert

Haggett, as returning officer, directed the town clerk, Mr. John Hutchinson, to read the writ, precept, &c., and this formal ceremony was gone through in the Town Hall. The crowd round the hustings filled two-thirds of the market place, and all the windows and balconies commanding a view of the hustings were occupied by ladies. At half-past eleven the two candidates and their friends appeared on the hustings, but Mr. Bright was the greatest favourite, and his reception was most enthusiastic. Mr. John Henderson nominated Mr. John Bright as a fit and proper person to represent the old city of Durham in Parliament. "We shall send Mr. Bright to Parliament as the champion of Free-trade," said Mr. Henderson, "and when history records, as she will most assuredly do, the abolition of these wicked and unjust laws, which have so long robbed you of your natural rights—not for the benefit of the Government of your country, but for the benefit of a class—(cheers and hear, hear)—she will record at the same time that the men of the good old city of Durham came forward boldly, and set a glorious example to the other constituencies of the kingdom." (Great cheering.) Mr. William Shields seconded the nomination of Mr. Bright.

Mr. John Wetherall next came forward and nominated Mr. Purvis. Mr. John Forester was the seconder.

Mr. John Bright then delivered a lengthy speech, which extended over four columns and three quarters.

"It must not be supposed, because I wish to represent the interest of the many, that I am hostile to the interest of the few. But is it not perfectly certain that if the foundation of the most magnificent building be destroyed and undermined, that the whole fabric itself is in danger? Is it not certain, also, that the vast body of the people who form the foundation of the social fabric, if they are suffering, if they are trampled upon, if they are degraded, if they are discontented, if 'their hands are against every man, and every man's hands are against them,' if they do not flourish as well, reasonably speaking, as the classes who are above them, because they are richer and more powerful, then are those classes as much in danger as the working classes themselves. (Cheers.) There never was a revolution in any country which destroyed the great body of the people. (Hear, hear.) There have been convulsions of a most dire character, which have overturned old-established monarchies, and have hurled thrones and sceptres to the dust. There have been revolutions which have brought down most powerful aristocracies, and swept them from the face of the earth for ever, but never was there a revolution yet which destroyed the people. (Hear, hear.) And whatever may come as a consequence of the state of things in this country, of this we may rest assured, that the common people, that the great bulk of our countrymen, will remain and survive the shock, though it may be that the crown, and the aristocracy, and the Church, may be levelled with the dust, and rise no more. (Cheers.) In seeking to represent the working classes, and in standing up for their rights and liberties, I hold that I am also defending the rights and liberties of the middle and richer classes of society. Doing justice to one class cannot inflict injustice on any other class, and 'justice and impartiality to all' is what all have a right to from Government. And we have a right to clamour; and so long as I have breath, so long as I have physical power, so long as I have intellect, and so long as I have memory and voice to express opinion, so long will I clamour against the oppression which I see to exist, and in favour of the rights of the great body of the people. (Long and continued cheering.) . . . What is the condition in which

we are? I have already spoken of Ireland. You know that hundreds of thousands meet there, week after week, in various parts of the country, to proclaim to all the world the tyranny under which they suffer. You know that in South Wales, at this moment, there is an insurrection of the most extraordinary character going on, and that the Government is sending, day after day, soldiers and artillery amongst the innocent inhabitants of that momentous country for the purpose of putting down the insurrection thereby raised and carried on. (Hear, hear.) You know that in the Staffordshire iron works almost all the workmen are now out from want of employment and want of wages, and in attempting to resist the inevitable reduction of wages which must follow restriction upon trade. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) You know that in August last Lancashire and Yorkshire rose in peaceful insurrection to proclaim to the world, and in face of heaven, the wrongs of an insulted and oppressed people. (Cheers.) I know that my own neighbourhood is unsettled and uncomfortable. I know that in your own city your families are suffering. Yes. I have been to your cottages and seen their condition. Thanks to my canvass of Durham, I have been able to see the condition of many honest and independent—or ought to be independent—and industrious artisans. I have seen even freemen of your city sitting, looking disconsolate and sad. Their hands were ready to labour; their skill was ready to produce all that their trade demanded. They were as honest and industrious as any man in this assembly, but no man hired them. (Hear, hear.) They were in a state of involuntary idleness, and were driving fast to the point of pauperism. I have seen their wives, too, with their three or four children about them—one in the cradle, one at the breast. I have seen their countenances, and I have seen the signs of their sufferings. I have seen the emblems and symbols of affliction such as I did not expect to see in this city. Ay! and I have seen those little children who at not a distant day will be the men and women of this city of Durham; I have seen their poor little wan faces and anxious looks, as if the furrows of old age were coming upon them before they had escaped from the age of childhood. (Hear, hear.) I have seen all this in this city, and I have seen far more in the neighbourhood from which I have come. You have seen, in all probability, people from my neighbourhood walking your streets and begging for that bread which the Corn Laws would not allow them to earn.

‘Bread-taxed weaver, all can see
What that tax hath done for thee,
And thy children, vilely led,
Singing hymns for shameful bread,
Till the stones of every street
Know their little naked feet.’

(Hear, hear, and cheers.) This is what the Corn Law does for the weavers of my neighbourhood, and for the weavers and artisans of yours.” (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

Mr. Purvis next addressed the electors. The show of hands by an immense majority was in favour of Mr. Bright. Mr. John Tiplady, Mr. Purvis’s solicitor, demanded a poll. The next day (Tuesday) was appointed the day of election. At eight o’clock on the Tuesday morning voting began with vigour, and Mr. Bright’s admirers at once took a decided lead, which they kept up. No exertion was spared on either side, and at no previous election did the voters on the side of the Liberals display more anxiety and interest. Between three and four the excitement became intense. A few minutes after four Mr. Bright entered the Town Hall, and cheer after cheer rent the air, and hats and handkerchiefs were waved with vigour and pleasure. The market place was crowded beyond all precedent, and when Mr. Bright again mounted the hustings he was greeted with an outburst of cheering and enthusiasm which seemed almost irrepressible.

"I have met with much more civility, or rather, much less incivility, than I anticipated, where party feeling ran so high," said Mr. Bright to the electors. "I have to thank even those who are opposed to me for their kind looks, and their shaking of hands, and their lighted-up countenances, when they told me that they wished to give me their support, though they dared not, and added that we might meet again. I say you have manfully done your duty, not because you have chosen me, but because you have preferred the great and sacred principles to the advocacy of which some large portion of my life has been devoted. (Cheers.) I bid you until to-morrow farewell, with a feeling of gratitude and kindness which I am not able to express. I wish it were possible that every hand in this great multitude were one, that I might shake it, and, if possible, impart to those who own it the feelings which actuate me at this moment, and have actuated me throughout this contest. I trust from the events of this day that the country will, before long, shake itself from the chains by which it has been so long enthralled. (Cheers.)

'Men of England! heirs of glory
 Heroes of unwritten story,
 Nurslings of one mighty mother,
 Hopes of her, and one another.
 Rise like lions from your slumbers,
 In unvanquishable numbers;
 Shake your chains to earth like dew,
 Which in sleep had fallen on you.
 Ye are many—they are few.'

(Great cheering.)

On the Wednesday morning at ten o'clock the Town Hall was again crowded to learn the official report declared. The Mayor gave the numbers: Bright, 488; Purvis, 410. Majority for Bright, 78. (Great cheering.) On leaving the Town Hall Mr. Bright was "chaired" through the streets in procession. A carriage was in waiting for him, and was drawn by four grey horses. He was accompanied by his brother. The concourse was immense, and as the procession passed along there was one continual huzza, and gladness seemed pictured on every face. Almost every window on the line of road was crowded by ladies, and they waved their handkerchiefs and ribbons, and graciously smiled. Mr. Bright alighted at the Waterloo Hotel at twelve o'clock, and appearing at the balcony he again addressed the vast enthusiastic assembly, and shortly after he left by train the city he now represented in Parliament.

Throughout the kingdom the election had been watched with more than usual interest on account of the high respect entertained for Mr. Bright, and the change of opinion that was rapidly going on amongst the electoral body, with reference to the Peel Administration and free trade. As soon as it became known that Mr. Bright was the successful candidate, the electors of Durham were congratulated from all parts of the country in addresses and resolutions of thanks. Even at this early period Americans were noticing the career of Mr. Bright, and one of their leading journals thus described him:—"Mr. Bright is a man of great integrity, sound judgment, extensive information, pleasing address, an interesting and

impressive speaker, frank, straightforward, persevering and inflexible, a firm advocate for justice to Ireland, for universal suffrage, and for the separation of Church and State, a friend of peace with all nations and of justice to all men; and the election of such a man to Parliament, under such unfavourable circumstances, is worthy to be recorded conspicuously amongst the signs of the times as the hope of England."

Mr. Cobden was down in Gloucester at this time, and commenting on the result of the Durham election at a public meeting at Bristol, he remarked :—

"I think we have taken a great step literally in getting our friend, Mr. Bright, in, though I must say it was not done in Parliament; it was done in Durham, and we ought to take the opportunity of letting the Durham people know how we appreciate their work. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) The good men of Durham have struck the hardest blow at monopoly's bread-basket that it has had for some time. We complain of Parliament that it does not do our work, but do we choose men likely to do it? We do not choose for our members the sort of men we should select as executors or trustees in any settlement of our own; but we elect men who would shine most at a horse-race or an assembly, and who wear harlequin jackets to ride a race, and these inclinations are not disqualifications. If we can find a man with the qualifications which we should avoid in a trustee or executor, we choose that man to go to Parliament to do the national business." (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Cobden, upon meeting Mr. Bright at the League's rooms in Manchester, congratulated him on his success, and playfully said :—"I've had all the dirt thrown at me heretofore, now you being younger will share it with me, and probably get the largest share. You'll have it in style in the House of Commons." Bright enjoyed the pleasantry, and assured his friend that he was prepared to receive his share of their antagonists' vituperation.

The result of the election becoming known in Rochdale the Liberals were jubilant. Application was made to set the parish bells to ring to commemorate the event, but Mr. Wilson, the curate, would not consent, as Mr. Bright was a Dissenter, and he warned the ringers against sounding the bells at their peril. The two wardens ordered the ringers into the belfry and undertook to bear them harmless, but only a part of the men would consent to ring under the circumstances, so the matter was not pushed any further.

A large meeting was held at the Crown and Anchor, London, to congratulate Mr. Bright. Sir John Bowring was present, and in his speech paraphrased the famous epigram :—

"'Tis well enough that Goodenough
Should to the Commons preach,
For, sure enough, they're bad enough
For Goodenough to teach."

Sir John Bowring thus rendered it:—

“’Tis meet enough, and fit enough,
The House to be enlightened;
For, sure enough, they’re dull enough,
And wanting to be Brightened.”

Sir John Bowring spoke of Mr. Bright as his “youthful friend, about to appear in Parliament armed with the courage of youthful virtue.”

CHAPTER XVII.

HIS EARLY PARLIAMENTARY CAREER.

His Maiden Speech in the House of Commons—His Old Schoolmaster's Opinion of his Speeches—The Tories' and Whigs' Opposition in the House to Free Trade—Bright and Cobden's Visit to Salisbury, Canterbury, Reading, Liverpool, Bury, Oxford, Lancaster, Covent Garden Theatre, Doncaster, Durham, Haddington, Berwick-on-Tweed, Rochdale, Huddersfield, Manchester, Leeds, Holmfirth, and Warrington.

ON the 7th of August, 1843, Mr. Bright delivered his maiden speech in support of Mr. Ewart's motion for the reduction of import duties. The discussion was a short one, and the new member spoke from the bench, where Cobden and Brotherton usually sat, to the smallest audience he had addressed for years, and there was a listlessness and heaviness pervading it that could not but react on the speaker. A good deal of interest was felt as to how he would acquit himself. At first he was somewhat nervous, for however frequent a man may be in the habit of addressing mixed assemblies, to speak to an audience so critical as the House of Commons is rather a trying ordeal. He soon recovered his self-possession, however, and thrusting one hand into the breast of his waistcoat, he continued for somewhat more than half-an-hour to impress on the House in general, and the Prime Minister in particular, the urgent necessity of Free-trade, particularly in the article of corn. He impressed his hearers with the notion that no regard for parliamentary etiquette would hamper the unreserved and forcible expression of his honest convictions.

Altogether the speech produced a favourable impression. "Crime," he remarked, "has often vested itself under the name of virtue; but of all the crimes against the laws of God and the true interests of man none has ever existed more odious and more destructive than that which has assumed the amiable name of 'Protection.'" Another fine passage which drew forth "cheers" was his protest against the injustice of a law which enriches the rich and cares nothing for the poor; "and if, during the period I may have a seat in this House, I should ever directly or indirectly give any support to a system so manifestly contrary to sound policy, and so destructive of the welfare of the great body of the people, I should be ashamed to hold up my head in any

assembly of my countrymen." Forthwith Mr. Bright took part in the debates which daily claimed the attention of the House and the country. He and his League friends sat in the foremost ranks of parliamentary debaters, and by constant and oft-repeated assault they drove Peel, step by step, on the road to concession. He spoke with so much clearness, he painted the evils of the monopoly in colours so vivid, and proved the justice and necessity of their abrogation with argument so solid, that he soon took rank as one of the deepest thinkers and most powerful speakers of the House of Commons.

"As the sun,
Ere it is risen, sometimes paints its image
In the atmosphere; so often do the spirits
Of great events stride on before the events,
And in to-day already walks to-morrow."

In the *Illustrated London News* of that date it was stated that "as a speaker Mr. Bright is far superior to many who are listened to in that assembly; but those who know the constitution of that House know also the great influence of station, name, and wealth, and how much dulness will be tolerated from one of a good family. . . . Mr. Bright is about the middle-size, rather firmly and squarely built, with a fair, clear complexion, and an intelligent and pleasing expression of countenance. His voice is good, his enunciation is distinct, and his delivery free from any unpleasant peculiarity or mannerism. He is young, and has apparently a long career before him. His dress is rather more *recherché* than that of the 'Friends' of a generation back, differing but slightly from the ordinary costume of the day."

Mr. Littlewood, Mr. Bright's old schoolmaster, read the speeches of his eminent scholar with great interest, and often would lean back in his chair and exclaim, "Too strong, John, too strong." He admired the speeches, but thought some parts of them might be milder. "A little more experience and age," he used to say, "would tone down the slight blemishes;" and now taking a retrospect of the right hon. gentleman's speeches, one cannot but admit the improvement that has taken place when compared with some of his first utterances. Still when Mr. Bright's asperity wore off, and a certain intelligent precocity was mellowed down, his speeches became more interesting and instructive. His fixed principles and groundwork of thought were improved by mixing with society, and perhaps there was something in the criticism of his schoolmaster, but the particular ends wished to be accomplished at that time might not have been attained by less vigorous language. His

style of speaking became more clear and trenchant, but he had not attained that full abounding power of expression which is like an abiding passion and continues to stir in the written words, until later years. Then his delivery became easy and graceful, such as is seldom gained by speakers who have not tried to profit by the best models, and his orations were adorned with those flowers of poetry with which a wide study of English Literature had enriched his mind.

If the Free-trade movement obtained nothing either from the indifferent or the turbulent; it found equally little favour in the eyes of political parties. The Tories met it in their characteristic manner by jeering and discouragement, and grew more violent as they grew more hopeless; and the Whigs met it with a cold reception. When the League could help the Whigs—which was when they were in opposition—they smiled upon it; when they could help the League—which was when they were in office—they passed by on the other side. In spite of these formidable difficulties, Bright and Cobden worked persistently towards the goal. The two prominent leaders of the League, in their determined course, showed calmness, moderation, and dignity in their speeches, repelling every successive assault of passion, rashness, and personal resentment of the Protectionists. Mr. Cobden asked Sir Robert why he did not protect cotton, silk, wool, and tin, and intimated that he might as well fix the price of food as a duty on corn. Sir Robert replied that "It was impossible to fix the price of food by legislation." "Then," rejoined Cobden, who had now won an important admission, "on what are we legislating? Will Sir Robert try to legislate so as to keep up the price of cotton, silk, and wool?" No reply. "Then we come to this conclusion," said Cobden, "we are not legislating for the universal people."

The replies to the Free-traders were often mere slander, laughter, or derisive shouts. One member declared that the Leaguers wanted cheap flour simply that they might the better stiffen and make heavier their calicoes, and so cheat their customers. Dr. Bowring referred to the lowered wages of tailors and shoemakers (much laughter). When it was stated that women "were crying for employment" (still laughter); women were making trousers at sixpence a pair (loud laughter); thousands were starving for food (yet laughter); and there were peals of laughter when some one asked what was to become of the starving operative women of Manchester! At length Sir Robert charged the Free-trade members with trying "to stop the progress of the public business," for they con-

stantly returned to their great theme. "The public business," said Cobden, rising to his feet with considerable warmth, "the public business is the voting of the militia estimates, I suppose, to put down the starving people. We might be better employed in finding them food. The New Poor Law will not save your estates. Your present policy will create an amount of poverty that will break through stone walls. Will the right hon. baronet resist the appeals which have been made to him? or will he rather cherish the true interests of the country," and give relief? If by the last he should lose his political friends, "he might say he found the country in distress, and he gave it prosperity; he found the people starving, and he gave them food; he found the large capitalists of the country paralysed, and he made them prosperous."

Turning away from the Whigs and Tories alike, the League resolved to make Free-trade their one demand, and to strive to return to Parliament those who were in its favour, independent of their opinions on other questions. This they were able in many instances to effect, for the attention of the constituencies being now awakened by the speeches of Bright and Cobden, lectures, and pamphlets, which were so industriously employed, the assault could now be carried within the walls of Parliament. Mr. Cobden had the faculty for setting a single truth in many lights, and pressing it home to numberless unexpected applications. He had the ability of stating his theme again and again in the same address, and yet with such variety of phrase as destroyed all sense of monotony. He was so charged with his convictions that they flowed from him without the aid of art. His very tones, sharp and incisive, crept through the lines of the Opposition, and galled them like a volley of small musketry. Bright followed with his vigorous argument and eloquence, which swept away the flimsy and selfish reasoning of the Protectionists, and victory loomed not far in the distance.

The inhabitants of the city of Salisbury were aroused from the monotony of their course of life by the arrival of Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden on the 8th of August, and the holding of an open-air meeting on the "Green Croft." A commodious hustling had been erected in the field for the convenience of the speakers and friends. The concourse of persons was said to number about 4,000, and a large number were farmers. Mr. Peniston was the chairman.

"In coming down from London to-day," said Mr. Bright, "we passed through many miles of waving corn. We have seen how the sun and shower, the beautiful machinery of an all-wise and merciful Providence, have blessed the earth with fruit-

fulness; we have seen how secure the reliance in many places on the unfailing good of Him who sends seed-time and harvest, and who has promised that they shall never fail. We have faith in His bounty and in His superintending care; we ask only that we may possess what He offers to us freely; that we may in security enjoy what He pleases to grant us; we ask that our fellow-men may not improperly interfere between the good gifts of the Creator and the wants of His creatures; and we ask the freemen and inhabitants of this ancient city, and of this country, to give us their cordial support in our endeavours to do justice to the much-injured and oppressed populations of our suffering country." (Cheers.)

In the evening a dinner was given to Messrs. Cobden and Bright in the Assembly Rooms, and about one hundred gentlemen were present.

Four days after, the inhabitants of Canterbury were agitated by the presence of Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden. At half-past two in the afternoon, however, the monopolist landowners and farmers, to the number of 400, held a meeting in the Canterbury Corn Exchange, to determine what course they should take with regard to the visit of Messrs. Cobden and Bright. Sir Brooke Brydges, chairman of the East Kent Agricultural Association, presided, and said that they had to consider the expediency of offering any opposition to the arguments which might be advanced by Messrs. Cobden and Bright. He was adverse to offering opposition himself. Mr. Boys, of Waldershaw, near Dover, moved "that the farmers do not consider it expedient to enter into discussion with respect to the Corn Laws at the meeting." Mr. G. P. R. James, the well-known novelist, seconded the motion, which was carried.

Notwithstanding the avowed determination of the monopolists, nearly the whole of the assembly went to the open-air meeting at the Cattle Market, and swelled the numbers of the auditors to about 3,000. Sir John Tylden was the chairman. Mr. John Bright delivered a lengthy address, and Mr. Cobden followed. After a Chartist, named Mr. Webb, had questioned Mr. Cobden, Mr. Alderman Brent moved a Free-trade resolution; Mr. Gaskell seconded it, and it was carried by an immense majority.

As Messrs. Cobden and Bright were leaving the Rose Hotel for Ashford, in a carriage, about a dozen small landowners pressed round, exhibiting enraged countenances, and one even pushed Mr. Cobden in the breast with his stick.

On the 14th of August Mr. Bright took part in a discussion in the House of Commons on the subject of "The Chelsea Hospital Out-Pensioners Bill."

"I was in the manufacturing district last year," remarked Mr. Bright, "when the disturbances took place. My house is within 200 yards of the place where nearly 10,000 men and women assembled daily, and even twice a-day, during the turn-out.

There was no feeling against the persons or property of their employers; but there was a conviction, based upon long and grievous experience, that they were ill-used, that they had wrongs of no common magnitude, that this House was regardless of their petitions and remonstrances, and that any change in their condition must be for the better. The town in which I reside was for some days in the possession of a numerous body of the turn-out workmen. They had the power, if they had been disposed, to do serious mischief; but scarcely a sixpence-worth of damage was done to any property in that town during the whole of these unhappy transactions. (Hear, hear.) But have the people no excuse for these proceedings? Can any member of the Government point out any single concession of any moment made to the people, except under the influence of fear. Were there no grievances in Canada before the breaking out of the insurrection in that colony? The abuse was continued, was even defended on both sides of the House, until the news of the rebellion arrived, and then, wonderful to relate, the leaders of both parties discovered at once the precise remedy which was required."

The flourishing town of Reading, where it will be remembered John Bunyan took refuge for a time, dressed as a carter, was entered by Bright and Cobden on the 19th of August, and they delivered their speeches in the Town Hall. Several days before, the committee of the Berkshire Agricultural Society had placarded the district, advising the farmers not to attend the meeting; but the recommendation was not generally adopted.

On the 30th of August a Free-trade demonstration was held in the Royal Amphitheatre, Liverpool, and so crowded was the building that thousands were unable to gain admittance. Mr. William Rathbone was the chairman. The meeting was addressed by Messrs. J. T. Cook, John Smith, James Mollineux, Richard Sheil, and Christopher Rawdon. Mr. Bright in the course of a lengthy speech said:—

"Let them look at the question as it regarded this town of Liverpool. He was not going into a long historical account of Liverpool. Most historians or antiquarians who had written about it showed that not long ago it was a small and unimportant village; for at a time when Lancaster was required to pay fifteen marks, and Preston thirteen, only eleven were demanded from Liverpool. (Hear, hear.) There was a time, not 300 years ago, when Liverpool contained only 138 householders and cottagers—a time later than that when there were only twelve vessels belonging to Liverpool. A writer speaking of Liverpool in 1515 said, 'Irish merchants come hither as a good haven. At Liverpool is small customs paid, and that causeth merchants to resort thither.' Now he thought that very much to the point. (Hear, hear.) 300 years ago merchants came to Liverpool because small customs were paid; but now a duty of twelve shillings per barrel was charged upon American flour—not a very small custom was that." (Laughter and cheers.)

A Free-trade festival was given at Bury, on the 31st of August, with a view to celebrate the return to Parliament of Mr. Bright for Durham. A handsome pavilion was built for the occasion, and it was erected in Paradise Street. Mr. R. Walker, the member for Bury, presided. Mr. R. Ashton, Joseph Brotherton, M.P., Edmund Grundy, of Bridge Hall, the Rev. F. Howarth, Mr. Alderman Brooks, and Mr. A. R. A. Moore addressed the immense gathering. Mr. Bright was re-

ceived with three rounds of cheers, and during his speech he said :—

“The whole of the county of Lancashire was most wretchedly cultivated. There were miles of land between Birmingham and Manchester where there were little more than rushes; and between Bury and Preston, or between Rochdale and Preston, by way of Haslingden and Blackburn, there were miles of land not cultivated at all. The Corn Law was to make England like a garden, but it was so far different from what it ought to be that it was in truth in many parts a wilderness.”

Six days after this, the Liberal electors of Bury gave a dinner to their member, Mr. R. Walker, in the same pavilion, and about 600 gentlemen were present. Mr. Richard Ashton, of Lime Field, was the chairman. Messrs. Richard Walker, E. Grundy, Joseph Brotherton, M.P., Thomas Wrigley, H. Ashworth, and Dr. Browning addressed the meeting.

“If I were a politician holding sentiments the very opposite of those I hold,” remarked Mr. Bright in his speech, “I confess I durst not turn back to look upon the pages of my country’s history, to see what my opinions had been. I should feel at once that I must either change those principles or libel the Deity. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Now I am not anxious that any great change should be made in this country by violent means, or that they should be made before the public opinion has grown up to these changes. I don’t believe it advantageous that Government should run very far ahead of the people. I should like all these changes brought about by the enlightened convictions of the great majority of the classes acting upon the Legislature and upon the Government, and then I am persuaded that those changes will not only be beneficial in themselves, but we shall have a guarantee that we shall never go back to the old system from which we are now so anxious to depart.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Vanderslegen, the High Sheriff of Oxford, in compliance with a requisition, called a meeting of the inhabitants on the 13th of September to consider the question of the Corn Laws. About 1,800 persons were present. Mr. Samuel Cooper, the under-sheriff, presided. Mr. R. Cobden first addressed the meeting. Mr. Sparkhall next contended that the repeal of the Corn Laws would plunge the nation into such a state of depression as must ultimately terminate in national bankruptcy. Lord Camoys next moved a resolution against the abolition of the Corn Laws. Mr. Langton, M.P., for Oxford, seconded this resolution. Mr. Bright then addressed the meeting powerfully. He was followed by Lord Norreys, who expressed the opinion that the remedies proposed by Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright would not have the effect which it was stated they would have. Mr. Henley, M.P., expressed similar opinions. Mr. Towle, a tenant farmer, moved a Free-trade resolution, which was readily seconded, and only about a dozen persons were in favour of the original resolution; therefore the Free-trade resolution was carried by an immense majority.

Messrs. Bright and Cobden again visited Lancaster on the

23rd of September, and in the afternoon of that day an open-air meeting was held on Green Acre, a spacious plot of land on the south bank of the River Lune. Mr. T. H. Bateman was the chairman; Mr. Bright's speech was four columns and a half in length. The member for Durham was present at the first Anti-Corn-Law League monthly meeting, held in Covent Garden Theatre, London, on the 28th of September, 1843, and the number of persons present was estimated at 5,000. Mr. George Wilson was the chairman, and Messrs. Paulton, R. Cobden, and W. J. Fox were the speakers. Mr. John Bright also addressed the meeting at great length.

"In the United Kingdom there were four millions of paupers," he said, "and it was terrible to think that the Queen, a lady who, from all they knew of her, possessed sympathies like the rest of her sex—sympathies that would love and bless all on whom she could pour blessings—should wield a sceptre, not over twenty-seven millions of happy, independent people, but over three or four and twenty millions living as they best could, and four millions of absolute and hopeless paupers. (Loud cheers.) There are boasts of our glorious constitution in Church and State; there are boasts of our three estates of the realm—Queen, Lords, and Commons. (Hear, hear.) We are extremely fond of boasting of ourselves for everything; but it is a strange constitution—a strange perfection of human government—a strange illustration of the enlightenment of our system, that one-seventh of our people are in a condition of miserable and hopeless pauperism." (Loud cheers.)

On the 13th of October, 1843, a demonstration was held in Covent Garden Theatre, London, to promote the cause of Free-trade. The stage, pit, boxes, and gallery were crowded, although an additional gallery had been reopened for the occasion, capable of seating from five to six hundred persons. The Hon. C. P. Villiers presided, and the meeting was first addressed by Mr. R. Cobden; Mr. John Bright followed:—

"A long day's march is made by steps, and each step is but a small advance; but after an hour's march, or some hours' march, if we stand and turn round, and look to the point from which we started, we are able to form a correct opinion of the progress we have made. And now my mind reverts to the commencement of this great struggle with feelings of no ordinary kind. I am just now looking into the small room in Manchester where, on one memorable evening, seven men met—men not of title, not of wealth, not pretending to brilliant genius, but men of honest character—men of common sense—(cheers)—men having deep sympathies with their fellow men, and men of high resolve. (Loud cheers.) They met and determined that that meeting should be the commencement of a struggle which should never terminate but with the termination of the existence of the accursed Corn Laws. (Cheers.) And from that hour to this I have traced step by step the progress we have made. We have seen fallacy after fallacy scattered to the winds; we have seen foe after foe driven from every field; we have seen triumph after triumph achieved; and now, from that small room in which seven men met, we are here assembled in this gorgeous building, and with this great, this magnificent audience. (Loud cheers.) And it can be but the harbinger of the triumph of this great cause. (Cheers.) We might lay the whole world under contribution if we had free trade. All nature lies extended before us—her vast treasure-houses are open to us—there is nothing that is good for man under the sun that may not be brought to England in return for the produce of England's industry. (Cheers.) I would not lay the world under contribution by marauding and buccanering expeditions; it should not be by ships going forth filled with England's thunder and with deadly

weapons, but by merchant ships, which should carry abroad the thousand things you make, which in a kindly manner you would exchange with every people under heaven, bringing in return all they have to spare, to nourish and cherish and prosper the people of this country. (Cheers.) I recollect in my boyish days reading books, and stories, and histories, in which the characters of London merchants were portrayed. Your merchants were princes, your traders nobles of the earth. The London or the British merchant was pointed out as a man, above all others, remarkable for industry, integrity, generosity, and an unquenchable love of everything noble and just. (Loud cheers.) To the merchants and traders of London we appeal. And when our labours are over, when our warfare is accomplished, our consolation and our reward shall be—and every man who has helped us shall participate in it—that in our day and generation we have been permitted to advance at least one great step towards the glorious and the promised time, when human laws shall harmonise with the sublime injunction of the Christian Code, and when man, as an individual or in communities, shall accept and obey that divinely precept of them all, ‘Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.’” (Long and continued cheering.)

Mr. W. J. Fox on the occasion also delivered a lengthy speech.

Mr. John Bright next visited the town of Doncaster, on the 14th of October, 1843, in company with Mr. Cobden, and lunched with Mr. J. W. Childers at his seat at Cantley. A Free-trade meeting was held in the Town Hall; Mr. Thomas Johnson, the ex-mayor, presided, and the meeting was addressed by Mr. Richard Cobden, Mr. John Bright, Earl Fitzwilliam, and Mr. Childers.

It was in autumn when an agricultural meeting and dinner was held at Durham, on the 24th of October, 1843. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden were present, and met with an enthusiastic reception from farmers, peasants, and artisans. The tables groaned under the load of substantial viands, which gradually vanished by the united efforts of the rustic youths and maidens, husbands and dames. Then followed the feast of reason and the flow of soul in the hearty speeches and warm plaudits.

The following day Messrs. Bright, Cobden, and Ashworth, who were styled the A B C of the League, were at Haddington with farmers, with whom they discussed the important subject of the Corn Laws. The meeting took place in the West Secession Church, which was crowded by an eager and attentive audience. Mr. George Hope, of Fenton Barnes, was the chairman.

The day after the same three gentlemen were at Berwick-on-Tweed, situated on the frontier of England and Scotland, and the scene of constant struggles between the two nations. A meeting was held in the Town Hall, and the audience, which numbered about 1,100, gave them a hearty reception. Mr. Edward Henderson, of Hawick, presided.

“Look at the ocean,” remarked Mr. Bright, “how it spreads itself before the admiring gaze. Look how its billows curl and play, and seem to invite your ships

to float upon its bosom. Observe those winds, blowing from continent to island, and from island to continent, ready to waft the produce of each to cheer the heart of man in all. And then think of that gracious Being who has bestowed these things upon His creatures with such a bounteous hand that all might enjoy the blessings He has shed upon the face of the earth, were it not that we are debarred from their free use because monopoly restricts trade, and denies that right to purchase our daily bread from any but the landlord of this country." (Cheers.)

The earth was now fast "losing its flowery grace, and purple pride," for it was the early part of November, and the weather was dull and inclement. Mr. Bright was temporarily indisposed through the bodily and mental fatigue he had passed through, for in nine days he had travelled 850 miles, and had attended meetings at Alnwick, Cockermouth, Durham, Haddington, Berwick, and Kendal, but on the 7th of November he and Mr. Cobden were down at Kendal delivering speeches on behalf of Mr. Henry Warburton, who was contesting an election in that town in opposition to Mr. George Bentinck, and the Free-traders achieved a triumph over the house of Lonsdale; for they returned Mr. Warburton by a majority of sixty-three. A few days after, Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden were at Salisbury, advocating Mr. Bouverie as a candidate for Parliament against the candidature of Mr. John H. Campbell. When they were introduced to the first meeting the audience rose and cheered lustily for several minutes. Mr. Campbell, however, was returned by a majority of forty-five.

On the 14th they were back again in Manchester at a meeting at the Town Hall, to "consider the best means of aiding the future operation of the League." Mr. Robert Hyde Greg presided, and the attendance eclipsed all former meetings of the kind. Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. Alderman Callender, Mr. Alderman Kershaw, Mr. James Chadwick, Mr. Alderman Brooks, Sir Thomas Potter, Mr. Robert Gardner, and Mr. John Bright delivered speeches. £13,755 9s. were subscribed by the meeting towards the proposed fund of £100,000, and of this sum Mr. John Bright and his brothers contributed £500.

A meeting was held in Rochdale Theatre, on the 28th of November, and Mr. Henry Kelsall occupied the chair. The scene was a really stirring and vivid picture of enthusiasm. Mr. Cobden was the first speaker, and was followed by Mr. W. J. Fox, who, in reply to the arguments of the Protectionists, who exhorted the English to depend upon themselves, remarked:—

"Why, on a recent occasion, the dress of one of the Protectionists was analysed: the beaver hat on his head was French, the leather in his boots was French, the figured satin vest was French, and even the very cambric handkerchief which he carried in his pocket was French, until he was shown to depend upon the foreigner physically from head to foot. (Hear, hear.) Now, we might follow up that view

to a general consideration of his habits, his modes of living, and his thought. (Hear, hear.) Where, then, is the wealthy landowner of this country really independent of the foreigner? Take him from head to foot: to-day he has a French cook to dress his dinner for him, and a Swiss valet to dress him for his dinner—(cheers and laughter)—he hands his lady to it, her modest blushes concealed beneath a veil of Brussels lace, French gloves on her hands, and an ostrich plume waving over her head which never grew in an English poultry yard. (Renewed cheers and laughter.) His wines are from the Rhine or the Rhône; his galleries are rich in paintings from Italy, or in statuary from Greece; his favourite horses are distinguished for their Arabian blood; and his favourite dogs are of St. Bernard's breed. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) His education is from Greece and Rome; and even his religion itself from Palestine (hear, hear); the very fields from which he enjoys his revenues are now manured from guano as un-English (great applause); and at last, if he rises to judicial honours, he carries on his shoulders that honoured ermine which never before was on the back of an English beast (loud cheers and laughter); and, when he is worn out with warning us against the foreigner, as in his cradle he played with a coral from the Oriental ocean, so the sculpture that adorns his tomb is beautiful in marble from the quarries of Carrara. (Loud applause.) . . . Nearly a quarter of a century ago, the great poet of this country, knowing well the class to which he belonged, thus describes the motives by which they were then actuated in their support of a former Corn Bill, preparatory to that under which the country has suffered so long. Byron thus speaks of the landowners of 1821:—

‘Their ploughshare was the sword in hurling hands,
 Their fields manured by gore of other lands.
 Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent
 Their brethren out to battle—why? for rent.
 Year after year they voted cent. per cent.,
 Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions—why? for rent.
 They roared, they dined, they drank, they swore, they meant
 To die for England; why then live?—for rent!
 The peace has made one general discontent
 Of these high-market patriots—war was rent!
 Their love of country, millions all mis-spent,
 How reconcile!—By reconciling rent!
 And will they not repay the treasures lent?
 No; down with everything, and up with rent!
 Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,
 Being, end, aim, religion—rent! rent! rent!’

Mr. John Bright next addressed the meeting. A subscription was invited, and £1,574 was contributed, making with the £1,150 subscribed at the Manchester meeting by Rochdale gentlemen, a total of £2,724. The previous year Rochdale subscribed £2,200 to the £50,000 fund.

The League's monthly meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, London, held on the 30th of December, was so crowded that hundreds of persons were unable to gain admittance. Mr. George Wilson was the chairman. Mr. R. Cobden informed the meeting in his speech that there were agricultural labourers in Dorsetshire, heads of families, who were paid only 5s. a week for their labour. To see what these peasants were dining upon a party of gentlemen determined to send out into the neighbouring district of Dorchester at dinner-time, and out of ten families seven were found eating small potatoes the size of walnuts, the gleanings of the potato fields, without any meat, bread, or anything else, and this was the diet of their “Bold peasantry, their country's pride.” Dorset was represented by Lord Ashley,

who devoted much of his time and attention to the condition of the manufacturing districts, but if he did not bring the case of the Dorsetshire peasantry before Parliament, and expose their condition, and suggest a remedy for their distress, then he would fail to do justice to his constituency. Mr. Lambert, of Salisbury, Col. P. Thompson, and Mr. John Bright addressed the meeting.

"In Westmorland there is a certain very huge castle," said Mr. Bright, "at which a certain very powerful baron resides. The family of this baron monopolise the representation of the county, and had a longing eye for the representation of Kendal also. The baron's steward was sent to Kendal, and great exertion was made, and being the steward of a lord it was thought very rude indeed that anybody should object to do his bidding. And on the day of the poll I saw on a bridge near the polling-booth fifty or sixty men, evidently from the country each or nearly every one of whom had a large heavy stick in his hand. A friend of ours, living in the neighbourhood of Kendal, saw a man on the bridge with whom he was acquainted. He called him, and asked what those men were there for. 'Oh,' he replied, 'I be one of them.' 'You one of them!' my friend said; 'but what are you doing here?' 'Why, Mr. So-and-so, the steward, came, and he said we were to come here.' 'But what were you to do?' 'We were to stop on the bridge, and I guess we shall have to do just what we are ordered to do.' (Loud laughter.) . . . In Salisbury and in the neighbourhood, when we saw a very large house, we were told that it was the union workhouse, and we were informed that it was no very luxurious fare that men had in those buildings, and some men denounced them as the receptacles of victims who were doomed to great hardships. But there is something worse in existence than the union, or its inmates would not have been found there. It was a fearful alternative which was presented before them. There was starvation on the one hand, and the union, with all its possible miseries, on the other. They fled, as nature dictated to them, from the one, and consented to take refuge in the other. (Cheers.) Then there were large gaols pointed out to us, for crime of late years has been fearfully on the increase. Poverty and crime generally go hand in hand. A great deal has been said lately about a special gaol delivery, the reason assigned being that the gaols are now so much crowded. We have seen during the last five years a state of things having a tendency to the general wreck of all that is desirable and excellent, all that is advancing to our species in the country. And then the class for whose especial benefit this hideous system was ostensibly created, and for whom it is now hypocritically maintained, is at this moment the most suffering class of people in the country. . . . We sought not that office we now hold; we had no wish to leave our homes, our occupations, and the pleasures which belong to them, or our ordinary business, to come thus prominently before the public. We have no wish to see ourselves lauded beyond our deserts, and at other times most foully slandered. But here we are, borne along upon the wave of public opinion, which is every hour rising higher and higher, and can we now retreat? (Loud cheers and cries of "No, no.") We should be unworthy the name of independent, honest men were we to do so." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright next made his way to Liverpool, where on the 6th of December a meeting was held in the Amphitheatre. The enthusiasm in the cause of Free-trade was unmistakable. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, as soon as they appeared on the platform, were received with tumultuous and prolonged plaudits. Mr. Thomas Thorneley, M.P., presided. Mr. R. Cobden, Mr. Lawrence Heyworth, Mr. W. Rathbone, and Mr. John Bright delivered speeches, and £4,600 were subscribed by the ladies and gentlemen present.

A large number of the inhabitants of Huddersfield met in

public meeting in their Philosophical Hall, on the 7th of December, and practically manifested their sympathy with the objects of the League by contributing £1,322. Mr. F. Schwann was unanimously called to preside, and in opening the meeting remarked that the labourer was still cheated of his hire, and the poor deluded farmer, instead of trusting to his own energies, and asking for long leases, still believed in the magic power of protection. He was continuing to allow himself ignorantly to be protected into ruinous rents, into servile dependence, and into the dreary prospect of seeing his poor children compelled to seek a distant clime as a new home. Messrs. W. Willans, T. P. Crossland, J. T. Clay, George Mallinson, R. Cobden, J. Bright, and R. R. R. Moore addressed the meeting.

On the 15th of December Mr. Bright was present at a meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, which was held for the purpose of receiving the report of the great League Fund Committee on the progress of the subscriptions. The magnificent hall was crowded, and intense interest was taken in the proceedings. Mr. George Wilson was in the chair, and was supported by a large array of gentlemen. Mr. Hickin read the report, and announced that £20,280 15s. 4d. had been subscribed in Manchester up to that time.

"Manchester was the cradle of the Anti-Corn-Law League," said Mr. Bright, "and the League in those days was but an inefficient instrument—weakly, but still giving promise of strength—and now it has grown up to be a giant of enormous strength and good proportions, which is marching on to the accomplishment of the greatest triumph which mankind probably has ever achieved." (Applause.)

Mr. W. J. Fox was next introduced to the meeting, and in the course of his speech he said:—

"I am glad to see those who have sent forth through the length and breadth of the country the men who, if they may not yet be said

'The applause of listening senates to command,'

are in a way for accomplishing a much greater object than the applause of any senates; and as they march onward to the accomplishment of their great purpose,

'Will scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,

And read their history in a nation's eyes.' (Applause.)

Full of anxiety for the success of this cause, to their devotedness of spirit, backed by your cheering aid, what will not the country owe? and how proud shall all be who, like myself, are thus privileged to come among you to acknowledge the obligations which, throughout the land, we feel to them—feel to many on whose merits I will not dwell because they are here round me."

A spirited demonstration came off at the Oddfellows' Hall, Halifax, on the 16th of December, at which Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden spoke.

Mr. Bright witnessed at the great commercial capital of

Yorkshire, "busy Leeds," an enthusiastic demonstration of public feeling, on the 13th December, 1843, in the Music Hall of that town, which was crowded to excess. Mr. Hamer Stansfield, the mayor, was the chairman. Mr. James Garth Marshall was the first speaker. Messrs. Darnton Lupton, Henry Ashworth (of Bolton), Councillor Carbutt, George Wise, Richard Cobden, Frederick Baines, John Wilkinson, J. Bright, Col. Thompson, and J. C. Marshall addressed the meeting; and £2,110 were subscribed by the ladies and gentlemen present.

Next Mr. Bright was at Holmfirth, at a meeting in the Town Hall, on the 15th of December, there being present about 800 persons. Colonel T. P. Thompson and Mr. John Bright dwelt at length on Protection, and warned the audience against it. £105 was the amount subscribed at this meeting.

On the 19th of December Mr. Bright was present at a large meeting at the ancient town of Warrington, in the Reformers' Hall. Though suffering from very severe indisposition, he made a speech full of sterling argument, and abounding in original illustrations. Mr. Rylands also addressed the meeting, and £340 were subscribed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AWAKENING THE COUNTRY.

Bright and Cobden's Journeyings—Indisposition of Mr. Bright—Visit to Carlisle, Glasgow, and Edinburgh—Bright's Speech on the Apathy of Macaulay in the Free-trade Cause—Bright again in London, and at Greenock, Ayr, Kilmarnock, Dumfries, Sunderland, Sheffield, York, &c.

MR. BRIGHT had promised to address a meeting in the Theatre at Barnsley on the 20th of December, 1843; but in consequence of over-exertion, and the severity of the weather, he suffered severe indisposition, and was compelled to desist from travelling and public speaking for a short time, for it must be remembered that this was the last month of the year, which has been described as the "severest of them all." Travelling about the country on blustering nights, through nipping and chilling blasts, after speaking in densely-packed halls, was a very different thing from being snugly seated at home. He was no laggard, and turned out to face the storm, travelling here and there to different places many miles apart, for he knew that the cause was just and needed all the support and influence he could give it. The luxurious fireside, with all its surrounding comforts, did not tempt him to become dormant until fine weather set in. He might have, like the majority of gentlemen in his position, stopped at home on winter nights, taking a seat before a good fire, in company with his motherless little girl, and enjoyed all the comforts of an opulent mansion, and spent his evenings in reading the "grand old masters," while all was tempest without—the boisterous wind whistling through the trees.

" And the night shall be fill'd with music,
And the cares that infest the day
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

All men, whether their work is manual or mental, require and deserve ease at the close of the day; but Mr. Bright, although possessing the means of ample rest and pleasant relaxation, did not always find his pleasure in such welcome variety, as he was more than an ordinary British gentleman, for he was a patriot, and unable to take his ease while his countrymen were starving.

On the 8th of January, 1844, Mr. Bright had sufficiently recovered to visit the ancient city of Carlisle, which is rich in historical associations, and "legends of festal and of warlike deeds." In the evening a meeting was held in the Athenæum. The principal manufacturers and tradesmen and a number of ladies were amongst those present. Mr. Bright spoke with his accustomed vigour and eloquence, and was much applauded. £403 18s. were subscribed.

Two nights after, Mr. Bright was one of the speakers at a banquet at Glasgow in the City Hall, when upwards of £400 were subscribed to the League fund. The meeting was one of the most powerful exhibitions of public sentiment on the question of Free-trade which had been witnessed in the west of Scotland. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Fox Maule, Mr. R. Cobden, Mr. Alexander Graham, Rev. Dr. Heugh, Mr. Oswald, M.P., the Rev. Dr. Willis, and Col. Thompson.

"Think not that the present cessation of distress will be permanent," said Mr. John Bright at this meeting. "Has Providence granted you the blessings of bountiful harvests for ever? Does not the same divine wisdom rule now that ruled in 1839? and may not the same events await us in 1845 and 1846, and then comes a scarcity, followed by all the distress which fell upon us a few years ago? I ask, may not these calamities become so dense and unbearable that it may be that men may break the bonds they can no longer bear? I may say that the deliverance of the industry of this people is at hand. I speak not without authority. No men in this country have seen the faces of so many of their countrymen as we have, and we have authority for saying that it is the opinion of the middle classes of this country, who are the intelligent and the powerful, and the electoral classes, that this law is bad; that it originated in injustice, and has been maintained by an unjust exercise of power. (Cheers.) And we ask you, the people of this city, whether you are willing to come with us to the breach, to bear all, suffer all, and work all that is necessary for the carrying out of our principle—the fundamental principle of the Anti-Corn-Law League. (Great cheering.) And now I trust that what you have done for freedom, what you have done for civil and religious freedom, you are now ready to do for your commercial liberties. (Great cheering.) I ask you to resolve with me that:—

‘By oppression’s woes and pains,
By our sons in servile chains,
We will work, while strength remains,
But we shall be free.’” (Cheers.)

On the 11th of January, Mr. Bright took part in an enthusiastic meeting held in the New Music Hall in Edinburgh. The Lord Provost was in the chair, and thirty-four clergymen were present, and several deputations from various towns in Scotland. Mr. R. Cobden was the first to address the meeting. Mr. Hunter, and Mr. Duncan McLaren followed. At the opening of the meeting a letter was read which had been received from Mr. T. B. Macaulay, the illustrious historian, then one of the members of the city. It was sent from "Albany, London, dated Dec. 23, 1843," and ran as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—I have often expressed my opinion on the subject of the Corn Laws, and am not aware that I have anything to add, to retract, or to explain. You

will not, therefore, be surprised at my saying that I do not think it right to attend the meeting of the 11th of January."

The audience, as soon as the letter was concluded, hissed vehemently. A letter was also read from Mr. W. Gibson Craig, the other representative of Edinburgh. Mr. John Bright in his speech thus spoke to the audience:—

"You have subscribed already; you are again about to subscribe, to enable us to do that in other constituencies which we have already done here. But what if you who send us to teach and enlighten other constituencies—what, if you neglect yourselves—what, if the missionaries and apostles be the first to fall away from the faith—what if the constituency of Edinburgh, which is so intelligent, so well informed, and so zealous—what, if you rest satisfied to be represented in the House of Commons (tremendous cheering) by men, one of whom gives you a half-hearted and a hollow support, and the other meets your invitation to attend the discussion of this great question with a reply so brief that it looks like a rebuff? (Cheers.) One of your members is a man of some celebrity. Our vast possessions in the country of India are subject in part, I believe, to a code of laws which he took the chief part in drawing up. He is also known as a powerful and beautiful writer, especially on historical subjects. But does he know anything of the philosophy of history? Can he not look—for he possesses vast stores of knowledge—can he not look back to the history of other countries, and to the history of this country, and find there that the real way to disturb the happiness of a people is to substitute injustice and selfishness for justice and philanthropy? Can he not look there and find that true Conservatism is based on the elements and immutable principles of truth? Does he not know that the temper of the English people, and still more the temper of the people whom I now address, though it may be slow to move—though they may be friends to order, though they may venerate the institutions of our country, and look upon the aristocracy and the monarchy with awe and with affection—yet it is possible, when evils like these exist, that the iron may enter into their souls, that injustice may accumulate, till all the learning and the morals of the country—all the prejudices and preconceived notions that now exist—nay, all the religion in the land, may be insufficient to keep the people from breaking down suddenly, destructively, and for ever, the great and giant evils under which they feel oppressed. (Loud and long-continued cheering.) I much fear that this representative of yours contracts his vision and looks only upon party, and supposes that to be his country; or that he regards the interests of party as greater than that of the twenty-seven millions of people of Great Britain and Ireland, four millions of whom are in a state of abject suffering and hopeless pauperism. (Hear, hear.) But if he is not to be convinced—if in him, as his letter expresses, no change need be sought, and no change will be found—then we have here a field for the exercise of our special duties. (Cheers.) As a body sent by the dense population in which we live, and authorised by certificates ratified by one hundred public meetings in the country, we appeal to you and remonstrate with you as to the position in which you stand with regard to your representation. I have no hope of deliverance from the Crown, I expect no justice from the House of Lords (hear, hear); but I do look to the constituencies of the empire, that they will return men to the Commons House of Parliament who will not pander to the improper authority of the Crown, and who will still less support the unjust rights of the aristocracy, but who will pursue the great, the noble, the glorious object of defending the rights and interests of humanity, which are bound up in the rights and interests of the common people." (Loud cheers.)

After the meeting was addressed by Col. T. P. Thompson and Mr. R. W. Jameson, a subscription was made, and the sum of £1,362 was realised.

Mr. Bright was not present at a large meeting in Covent Garden Theatre, London, on the 25th of January, but Mr. W. J.

Fox was there, and in a lengthy speech gave some very important information :—

“I say that those laws are a crime that occasion the destruction of human food. (Hear.) Not long ago—about the time I was in Liverpool—a large quantity of American butter was brought out of the warehouses; a hole was bored in each firkin—the butter would not answer, as a commercial speculation, to pay the duty on it—and into those firkins pitch and other substances were poured, in order that this butter might be rendered altogether unfit for human use. I believe that it was ultimately actually made into grease for the wheels of locomotive engines. (Loud cries of ‘Shame.’) Let any one look at the tables of committals for offences, and compare it with the price of wheat from year to year. The exceptions are very rare in which a rise in the price of corn is not also attended by an increase in the number of committals. In the years from 1834 to 1836, when wheat was at 44s. 3d. a quarter, the average number of committals was 21,000; from 1837 to 1841, when wheat averaged 63s. 2d., the annual number of committals was 25,000—4,000 criminals added in a year by this horrible sliding scale of guilt and misery. To take extreme years: in 1835, when wheat was a little under 40s. a quarter, the number of committals was 20,731; in 1842, when wheat was 57s. 3d., the committals rose to 31,309. . . . In 1798 and in 1802 wheat was 59s. a quarter, the average of deaths 20,508 in London. In 1800, an intermediate year, and therefore not liable to any exception on the ground of increased population, when wheat was upwards of 60s., the number of deaths was 25,670; 5,000 deaths in that year analogous with the increase in the price of food, directly tending to impress on our mind the connection of cause and effect. It seemed as if the grim monster had forgotten his impartiality—as if the bony tyrant had become the very servant of monopoly; and though it is still, in some measure, true that ‘the rich and the poor lie down together in the grave,’ yet wealth, by its laws, sends the poor there first, and sends them there in numbers to prepare for its own reception.”

Mr. Bright next visited Greenock in company with Colonel Thompson, and a meeting was held in West Blackhall Street Chapel on the 15th of January.

In the afternoon of the following day, Mr. Bright and the gallant colonel arrived at the town of Ayr, where a meeting was held in the Theatre. Provost Miller occupied the chair. The audience consisted of a fair proportion of farmers, and a large number of the most respectable inhabitants of the town. Mr. Bright was warmly cheered on rising, and spoke for two hours and a-half.

In the evening of the same day he and Colonel Thompson were at the manufacturing town of Kilmarnock, and a meeting was held in the Relief Church. The audience was a very numerous one, including a considerable number of ladies. Sir John Cunningham Fairlie was called to the chair. Mr. Bright, although in a state of great exhaustion, delivered a lengthy speech, and was frequently applauded.

Notwithstanding the great physical fatigue Mr. Bright went through on the 16th of January, and the difficulty of travelling, for the earth was robed in white, he rested not from his labours, but addressed the inhabitants of Dumfries on the 17th of January. The audience numbered 400, and consisted chiefly of farmers. Mr. Bright's speech was replete with facts and

statistics, chiefly bearing on the subject from the agricultural point of view.

On the 23rd of January Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and Colonel Thompson were at Sunderland at a meeting in Athenæum Hall. Twelve months before only about 200 persons assented to listen to an address from Mr. Bright, so little interest was taken at that time by the inhabitants of Sunderland in the object of the League; but on the second visit 2,000 persons crowded to the hall to listen to the address, and subscribed £150.

Mr. Bright, accompanied by Mr. Cobden, went next to a meeting at Sheffield. In the neighbourhood of this town there was born, in 1781, "the Corn Law Rhymer," Ebenezer Elliott, who, in one of his rhymes, thus alludes to the attitude of Bright in the House of Commons:—

"Bright in the lion's den,
Champion of honest men,
Lion and dove of peace."

On the 24th of January Mr. Bright attended a meeting in the Cutlers' Hall of this ancient town, and delivered speeches. Mr. Edward Smith was in the chair; £726 were subscribed.

The antique and venerable city of York, which in ancient days was noted as the chief place in England for education, and at which Mr. Bright, it will be remembered, received part of his schooling, was visited by him on the 25th of January. He was accompanied by Mr. Cobden and Colonel Thompson. At the meeting which was held in the Festival Concert Room they received a hearty reception from the audience, and £117 were subscribed.

Next morning they journeyed to the bustling seaport town of Hull, and in the evening held a meeting in the Town Hall. £305 were contributed.

The prettily situated cotton-manufacturing town of Blackburn, which even in the seventeenth century was famous for its "checks," and in which John Hargreaves, a weaver, in 1764, conceived the idea of a spinning jenny, received the three representatives of the League on the 29th of January, and a meeting was held under the presidency of Mr. William Eccles, and £713 14s. 8d. were subscribed towards the fund.

Mr. Bright was one of the speakers at a banquet at the Corn Exchange, Wakefield, on January 31st, and so crowded was the hall that hundreds of persons were unable to gain admittance. Mr. James Garth Marshall was the chairman. Lord Morpeth

was one of the speakers, and Mr. John Bright thus commented upon his lordship's speech in his presence:—

"I have listened to the speech delivered by your late representative with feelings of mingled pain and pleasure: with feelings of pleasure at many beautiful sentiments which were expressed and clothed in as beautiful language; but with pain that hitherto he has not seen it right to take up to the full extent the principle which we ourselves are now advocating; but I cannot conceal from myself, that from his speech there is in his mind so small a remnant of love of what is old in this matter, that it seems most extraordinary if it should remain there long at all. (Hear, hear.) I listened to his description of some portion of his journey on the American continent; to the glowing language in which he spoke of those vast prairies, which seemed as if some countless ages since the vast ocean had flowed over them, and that by some omnipotent fiat it had been at once suspended and changed into solid earth; and I heard his description of those large rivers which rise no one knows how, or knows really where they are in future centuries to lead as highways from the ocean to the people who inhabit the banks. I was pleased to hear all this, and when he spoke of the surplus produce of those vast countries, and of the want there is in this country, I confess that I did feel disappointed—(loud cheers)—that any bar should be proposed or permitted to be put, which should in any degree narrow the market and the circle out of which we might obtain a supply for the hungry people of this country." (Cheers.)

Mr. R. Cobden, and Mr. Rand, of Bradford, addressed the gathering.

On the 1st of February Messrs. Bright, R. Cobden, and Col. Thompson presented themselves at the weekly aggregate meeting of the League at Covent Garden Theatre. This being the first metropolitan meeting at which they appeared since their return from their late provincial tour, they were received with the warmest plaudits. Mr. G. Wilson was in the chair. Dr. Bowring, the member for Bolton, was the first speaker.

"I have been listening during the last hour in the House of Commons," he said, "to a description of England's prosperity—to a description of the happy prosperity of the working classes—(hisses)—of the dispersion of the clouds which have too long hung over the commercial and manufacturing industry of our native land. The sun this day is shining; now, therefore, 'why do you complain?' (Ironical cheers.) True it is that in some districts and departments the amount of human suffering is diminished. I received a return yesterday from the town which I have the honour to represent, and it shows that there were only 3,000 persons receiving relief whose average earnings were sixpence farthing per week. (Cries of 'Shame.') I am answered, I know, by the fact that last year there were 13,000, and I gratefully acknowledge that there are 10,000 human beings less miserable than in the year that has just passed by."

Col. Thompson next addressed the meeting, and Mr. John Bright followed, and, in giving a description of his visit to Scotland, said:—

"All Scotland may be said to be with the League—(cheers)—enthusiastically with the League. The season of the year wherein we have visited the country is not that in which external nature shows to the greatest advantage,—but nature's landmarks were there still. The everlasting hills were there, the valleys and the plains, the lakes and the streams, and the waterfalls, and the associations which are connected with them, connected with the memorable past, and which point I trust to the hope of a still more glorious future. But there is in Scotland good which no season can affect: there was none of the foliage of summer, none of the golden lines

of the autumn; but summer can never dissolve the union which exists between the hearts of the people of Scotland and any good and noble object; and winter's frost can never chill the sympathies, can never cool the ardour of the people who have ever been foremost in the race of liberty, and are now anxious to lead you on to high and noble achievements. (Cheers.) . . . There is another pleasing feature in the present times, and that is the singular movement and flame which has burst out all of a sudden amongst the landowners, the clergy, and the farmers. (Hear, hear.) It is an outburst of passion on the part of the landowners and the clergy. Now I am not, I hope, trespassing beyond the objects of this meeting, and the legitimate province of a speaker here, in including the clergy in this expression of opinion; for if there be one man who has used more violent, unseemly, ungentlemanly, and unchristian language than another against the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League, it has been some man who writes "Reverend" before his name. (Hear, hear, and hisses.) I lament that any man who is in a position wherein he should be employed in teaching the people—who professes to expound to them, Sabbath after Sabbath, the beautiful and benign requirements of the Christian code—who stands up before a congregation to ask them to disregard filthy lucre, and many of the wants and wishes of this lower world, and to set their eyes upon things above, upon riches that are durable and eternal,—for such a man as this to appear upon platforms at meetings of landowners and farmers in the counties, and there to denounce this great national organisation—composed now of millions of his countrymen—as seeking to overthrow every valuable institution of the country, whilst he there is pleading for a law which is valueless to him and to his confederates, unless it inflicts want, and suffering, and famine, on hundreds and thousands of the poorest of the people. (Cheers.) . . . Greater labour has been bestowed in the collection of the funds of the Anti-Corn-Law League now in hand, and the agitation which has been carried on for the last four months, than any man can fairly judge of who has not partaken of it. (Hear, hear.) There has scarcely been a night upon which meetings have not been held, and frequently two upon the same evening. Every part of the northern district has been scoured and thoroughly visited; no man in that part of the country, who has not been desirous of remaining in ignorance, can say he has not had an opportunity of instructing himself upon this great question. . . . I wish it were possible to let everyone in this building see such a meeting as many of those which we have attended. You would there see manufacturers, shopkeepers, and artisans of every description, vying with each other in the support they give to the League. As many small tickets or cards with subscriptions upon them as would fill a hat have been collected at several of these meetings, which have not been one-fourth so numerous as this. Five, ten, and twenty shillings have frequently been given by men whose only property has been their labour (cheers); who never see a shilling or a sovereign which is not the produce, hardly earned, of their weekly toil; but, being deeply conscious that upon the solution of this question depends their steady employment, and obtaining remunerative wages, they have stepped forward to help in this great contest. . . . I am certain, also, that the world is looking on upon this great struggle; intelligence and virtue everywhere will respond to the appeal that we now make to you, and the time is not far distant when Britain shall add to all the other things of which she may boast, this greatest of all boasts—that she was the first of the great commercial nations of the earth who struck down a principle which has existed for centuries, and for centuries has been false, and that she had, as she has done in many other matters and on several occasions, led the world in a wiser path, and to a new career of greater, brighter, and more enduring triumphs than man has ever yet achieved." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright was next present at the weekly meeting at Covent Garden Theatre, on the 28th of February. Mr. George Wilson was in the chair. Mr. Henry Ashworth, of Turton, Bolton, was the first speaker, and was followed by Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright.

"We did not commence our agitation proposing always to use smooth phrases," said Mr. Bright. "Men do not use straws to cut down oaks. We are a great deal too much in earnest to go with 'bated breath and whispering humbleness' to those who trample upon the people of this country, and gently ask them to surrender the

rights which they have so long deprived us of. We know well what the character of our opponents is—that they have clutched the existence of the people, and hold in their grasp the prosperity of the industrious classes of this empire—that they are not only profoundly ignorant of what is best for their country, but are remorseless and relentless in the cruelties they inflict upon the poor. (Loud cheers.) . . . You have, I dare say, frequently passed the National Gallery, and witnessed the happy family pent up in a cage in the street in front of that building. (Hear, hear.) I saw them yesterday; there were three rats (laughter) nestling and warming themselves against the fur of a cat, which, under other circumstances, would have been their deadly enemy. A friend of mine asked the man who owns the cage and its contents how he managed to suppress their natural instincts and propensities, and make them thus tame and friendly towards each other. ‘Do you starve them,’ said he, ‘into compliance?’ ‘No, your honour,’ the man replied; ‘I feeds ’em well.’ (Loud cheers and laughter.) There is the secret of the compactness of the ministerial Corn Law majority. One part of them is in the enjoyment of power, place, pay, and patronage, which is widely distributed amongst their fellows, and spun out to the greatest possible length, new places being made wherever it can be done with any show of necessity. The rest are expecting something, and nearly all sit there quietly, anxious for the maintenance of the majority they now have, because Sir Robert Peel has promised them, or they say he has—for I confess I would not say that anything was a ‘promise’ which the right hon. baronet said in his position of Premier (cheers)—that Sir Robert Peel has promised them that he will maintain the Corn Laws, and the Corn Laws being the basis, as they think, of their rent-roll, they may therefore all be classed amongst the happy family which is kept together because they are well fed.” (Cheers and laughter.)

The first regular Free-trade debate of the Parliament session of 1844 was brought forward on the 7th of March by Mr. Labouchere, who proved that at that date we imposed a duty of 300 per cent. on Brazilian sugar and on coffee 200 per cent. Mr. Bright spoke on the question, and linked sugar and corn together as twin monopolies. The mere mention of the word corn alarmed all the members, who had just finished their dinner when Mr. Bright began to speak, and a cry of “question” was vigorously bawled out. “That *is* the question,” rebutted Mr. Bright. The discontented monopolists made a great noise for the purpose of putting down Mr. Bright, and one member cried out, “Don’t let that odious Leaguer talk of corn in connection with sugar!” Mr. Bright was determined not to be put down, and delivered his speech. The House divided, when 132 Free-traders supported the motion against 205 monopolists.

On the 12th of March Mr. Cobden brought before the House a motion for a select committee to inquire, on behalf of the tenant-farmers and farm-labourers of the country, into the effects of protective duties on imports. The same evening there was given to Mr. O’Connell a dinner, and the name of Mr. Cobden appeared on the list of stewards. The monopolists hoped that Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright would be delayed at the dinner and not be in the House in time to bring on the motion. “These men have an ugly way of sticking to business, and turning up at the proper time,” was the comment made by the

monopolists. That evening the benches on both sides of the House were full. All the ministers were in attendance, and the hum of conversation indicated that something of great importance was expected. The Speaker called on Mr. Cobden, and there instantly ensued profound silence. The occupants of the strangers' gallery, which was crowded, were excited, and listened attentively. Mr. Cobden's clear voice was heard, and every sentence and every word soon began to tell on the audience. He was well charged with facts and arguments, and so earnestly intent on their enforcement, that he commanded the deepest attention, and as soon as a cheer was given silence was restored instantly, as if they were fearful of losing what was coming next.

"Mrs. Wilshire, wife of a farm-labourer at Cherill, Wilts," said Mr. Cobden, "in her own pathetic way, says, 'Our common drink is burnt crust tea. We also buy half a pound of sugar a week. We never know what it is to get enough to eat. At the end of the meal the children could eat more bread, but there is never enough. The children are always asking for more at every meal. I then say, 'You don't want your father to go to prison, do you?' That is a specimen of the evidence collected in the South of England, in the purely agricultural districts by Mr. Austin. I have myself had the opportunity of making considerable observations in the agricultural districts, and I have come to this conviction, that the further you travel from the much-maligned region of tall chimneys and smoke the less you find the wages of the labourer to be. The more I leave behind me Lancashire and the northern parts of England, the worse is the condition of the labourer, and the less is the quantity of food he has. Does not this, I will ask, answer the argument that the agricultural labourer deserves protection from the Corn Law?' (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Bright supported his friend, pointing out that the very contradictions of Mr. Cobden's allegations were all so many additional reasons why the committee should be granted, in order that the facts might be sifted. He told the House that if the majority thought that the justice of the Corn Laws could be proved, they would grant the committee at once. At one o'clock in the morning the division took place, but the monopolists had a majority of ninety-one.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE CORN LAWS CONTINUED.

Mr. Bright and the Education of his Workpeople—The Ten Hours Agitation—Mr. George Thompson in London—Mr. Bright on the History of Lancashire—South-east Hants Society for the Promotion of Industry—Further Action of the Leaguers in the House—Bright at Northampton, Walsall, and Manchester.

THE education and welfare of his workpeople long engaged the attention of Mr. Bright and his brothers. Mr. Joshua Haigh, a Quaker, who had received a moderate education, was employed to teach reading in the office at Fieldhouse Mill. The arrangement carried out was, that one at a time received a lesson and then returned to work. In the same room was kept a library for the adults, and the books were lent for one penny per week, the money being spent to purchase new books. About the year 1840 Messrs. Bright built a commodious school near their mill for the use of the children of their workpeople and neighbours. A schoolmaster was engaged to impart education. The scholars in 1851 numbered 100. Four nights a week instruction was given to young people. Mr. Birkby, an excellent schoolmaster residing in Rochdale, was engaged several years in giving lectures on the various sciences. Mr. Cameron, of Manchester, one winter delivered a series of lectures on "Language," "Poetry," and "General Literature." These lectures were free to strangers as well as the workpeople, the firm defraying the whole of the expenses. A music-master was engaged two or three winters to give lessons in singing, and three-fourths of the cost were defrayed by Messrs. Bright. There were also two bands of music in 1854, numbering sixty performers. The books in the library at that time were 728, and a large number of newspapers were supplied. The cost of membership was one penny per week, which entitled them to the use of papers, books, globes, maps, &c. Thirty per cent. of the net income of the institute was spent in the purchase of new books. The building, fires, and gaslight were provided gratis.

Subsequently, in a speech in the House of Commons, Mr. John Bright stated :—

"In the factory with which I am connected we have a large infants school, together with a reading-room and newsroom, and a school for adults, where the workmen attend after working hours. We have also a person employed, at a very considerable

expense, who devotes his whole time to investigate the concerns of the workmen, and who is a kind of missionary among them. Not a few hundred pounds per annum are expended in promoting in this manner the interests of the workmen; and this, too, wholly independent of any act of the Legislature."

About this time the "Ten Hours" agitation was begun by the monopolists. Lord Ashley acted as their leader, and advocated that the daily labour in factories should be confined to ten hours per day. On the 15th of March he brought before the House of Commons the Government Factory Bill, and gave a one-sided picture of the life of factory workers. Mr. Bright on the occasion exposed some of the authorities on which Lord Ashley relied. The hours of labour of the factory operative at that time bore no comparison to the many hours that the farm-labourer had to toil who

"—knows no leisure, till the distant chime
Of Sabbath bells he hears at sermon time."

On the 27th of March Mr. Bright addressed the weekly meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League, at Covent Garden Theatre, which was presided over by Mr. Milner Gibson; Mr. Gisborne, M.P., and Mr. W. J. Fox also spoke.

"The principles of Free-trade are so simple," said Mr. Bright in his lengthy address, "that the mind of no unbiassed man who hears them will have any hesitation in receiving them as true. (Cheers.) Everything about him and around him, everything which he reads in history, everything which he sees in the arrangement of the universe, everything which he has in his own judgment, everything which prompts him in his heart, tells him that these principles of Free-trade should direct the world, and not that impious, that mischievous, that imbecile system of monopoly which we are here taking so much trouble to overthrow. (Cheers.) We ask that the world should be our workshop, and the wide world our market. (Cheers.) . . . The intelligence, industry, and virtue of the operatives in the north of England, and the enterprising skill and spirit of the manufacturers generally, all have been crippled under the laws passed by the men who neither understood these principles, nor knew much about the particular class for which they would legislate."

Mr. Bright's heart was cheered as he was journeying to New Mills, in Derbyshire, for his destination was the scene of his father's boyhood, and the time was spring, when Nature, bursting from her icy fetters, assumes her robe of green, and rejoicing in her new-born freedom holds her annual jubilee. The date was the 8th of April when he arrived at New Mills, and a meeting was held in Mr. Schofield's factory. Mr. Thomas Gisborne, M.P. for Nottingham, was the chairman, and Mr. Bright delivered an eloquent speech. £95 were subscribed towards the fund of the League.

Mr. Bright was present at the weekly meeting at Covent Garden Theatre on the 17th of April, but on that occasion he did not address the audience, as Mr. Ward, the then member for Sheffield, Col. Thompson, and Mr. George Thompson delivered

lengthy speeches. Mr. R. Cobden discharged the duties of chairman, and Mr. George Thompson thus beautifully commented on the history of the time :—

“Centuries of darkness and error, long ages of legislative blundering, and gross mistakes as to the effect of protective laws have passed away. Our pernicious example has, it is true, led other nations, by false induction, to adopt many of our self-destructive theories; partial interests have had a protracted reign, and when assailed have frantically defended their vested rights in systems of injustice and error. The whole machinery of party strife and the weight of Government influence have been engaged to uphold the cause of monopoly. But the day has dawned. Truths, hidden for ages, have been brought to light; the world, through all its beautiful and unending varieties of soil, climate, productions, wants, and interests has been viewed through the medium of common sense, and a reverential desire to read the will of God, as revealed in the works of His hand, and the dispensations of Providence. The profoundest maxims of political economy have been found to harmonise with the noblest plans of a religious and peace-breathing philosophy. Nor this alone. There have appeared those who may with justice be designated the apostles of Free-trade. (Hear, hear.) They have taken the truths discovered by the philosopher in his closet, or derived by men of the world from the enlightened observation of the situation, peculiarities, and mutual dependence of men and nations, and they have gone abroad to proclaim them through the length and breadth of the land. The living voice of the preacher of these truths has fallen upon the ear of millions of our countrymen. The pulpit, the exchange, the market-place, the crowded hall, the farmers’ dining-room, the ladies’ drawing-room, the county meetings, the open field, the highways and byways of the country—all have been made the scenes and theatres of an animated and instructive discussion of the doctrines. (Cheers.) No part of our population has been forgotten, or overlooked, or neglected. The ‘Free-trade Almanac’ is on the wall of the cottage, and he who could not read letters has been taught by speaking pictures. The Free-trade tract is on the table of the humblest citizen, and he has studied and understood the philosophy of labour and wages, of supply and demand. Light has been carried where it was most needed—into the Senate. A political economist has appeared who has clothed these truths in language the most convincing, arranged his arguments with a degree of simplicity and perspicuity never witnessed before, has expounded great principles in the hour of violent party strife with a temper and spirit that has extorted the admiration of his opponents, who would have rushed to his banner but for the fetters of mortgages and jointures about their limbs, or an unconquerable love of high rents. That man has demanded and enforced audiences of the upholders of monopoly in their loftiest seats, and they have sat mute while he spoke, and have remained mute when he sat down, because—alas for them!—they knew not how to meet him, and were afraid to yield. (Cheers.) Be of good courage, then. Fling away the trammels of party and expediency. Let principles have their due weight, and consideration, and influence. When the hour of trial comes, be just and fear not. Duty is ours—consequences are God’s. He who follows the dictates of conscience, the laws of nature, and the commands of Heaven, may safely leave the rest, and, dying, be satisfied with this verdict—returned by his own mind upon a review of his actions—I saw my duty, and I did it.” (Enthusiastic cheering.)

A banquet was held in the Amphitheatre, Liverpool, on the 12th of April, to further the principles of Free-trade, and the scene throughout was animated. Mr. Thomas Thorneley, M.P., was the chairman. Mr. W. Ewart, M.P., Mr. R. Cobden, Mr. W. Rathbone, and Mr. John Bright were the speakers.

Mr. Bright next visited Uxbridge, and delivered a speech to 600 persons in the Town Hall of that town on the 18th of April.

On the 15th of May he presided over the weekly meeting at

Covent Garden Theatre, and in opening the proceedings gave the Londoners some valuable information as to the history of Lancashire.

"I have met persons in the south of England," said Mr. Bright, "who, when speaking of Lancashire, spoke of it as if it were a county of no more than ordinary importance, as if they knew only this—that there were a number of grasping and avaricious (and some of them rich) manufacturers there, with rather a dense population of working men, brutalised, ill-paid, and degraded; that Lancashire was a county in which there were several considerable towns of a very dull character, connected by railroads (laughter); that, in fact, every feature of the county afforded pain rather than pleasure; and that it was to be looked at as a county only valuable for what could be got out of it, and as one which the tourist and lover of the picturesque should on all occasions carefully avoid. (Laughter and cheers.) Now I was born in the county, and have lived there for something like thirty years, and I know much of its population, and much of its trade, and much of its resources; and I am quite convinced—I am perfectly sure—that there is no other county in England which can compare with it in its real importance, as affecting the welfare and the power of this great empire. (Cheers.) It is the most populous county in England. (Hear, hear.) It is the most manufacturing county, as far as its productive power goes; it is the richest county in England. And what has it done? Time was when it presented a very different aspect from what it now presents. Some 240 years ago it was considered a wilderness. Camden in his Survey, after having travelled the country from York to Durham, proposed to enter Lancashire, and his mind was filled with apprehension at the prospect. His remark is: 'And first, of the people of Lancashire, whom I approach with a kind of dread'—in these latter days, too, there are some people who look upon Lancashire with dread (laughter and cheers)—'may it forebode no ill. However, that I may not seem wanting to this county, I will run the hazard of the attempt, hoping that the Divine assistance, which has favoured me in the rest, will not fail me in this.' He mentions some towns—Rochdale, which he first came to from Yorkshire, Bury, Blackburn, Preston, and Manchester—but he speaks of these only as being towns of scarce any trade, and that principally connected with the woollen manufacture. He mentions Liverpool as a small place on the sea-coast, and as the most convenient point for setting sail to Ireland; but of Ashton, Bolton, Oldham, and Salford, with other towns now in existence, he does not say a word, and there is no reason to believe that these other towns were known at that time. It may be worth while for a few moments to examine or to see how wonderful has been the increase of the value of property in that county. In 1692, 150 years ago, the whole annual value was £7,000. In 1841, the annual value was £6,192,000. (Cheers.) Thus there has been an average increase throughout that county in 150 years of not less than 6,300 per cent. Now the landowners should look to this as showing how trade is advantageous to them. Lancashire has for its size just as much land in it as any other county—that must be clear to all. I recollect a person standing upon a piece of rising ground and looking over the surrounding country, remarking to an inhabitant of the district who stood near him, that they seemed to have a great deal of land in the neighbourhood, which occasioned that individual some surprise, and I suppose it might be made with equal truth in every neighbourhood. Lancashire has landowners, and is divided into districts called hundreds. Of these hundreds three may be considered agricultural, and three manufacturing. The improvement in the value of the agricultural portions of the county has amounted to 3,500 per cent. in that period (hear, hear), while the manufacturing districts have improved to the amount of 7,000 per cent. (Cheers.) There is one estate in the neighbourhood of Manchester, the Chorlton Hall estate, which shows a remarkable increase in value. In the year 1590 it was sold for £320; in 1644, that is, 54 years later, it was sold for £300, its value not having increased at all in that time. In 1794, that same estate was sold for £70,000. (Cheers.) And of the township in which that estate is situated, I may remark that in 1815 the annual value of that township was £19,000; in 1829, £66,000; and in 1841, £137,000. (Cheers.) In a space of time less than 200 years, the value of that township, or the estate rather, has increased from £300 to three million pounds. (Cheers.) There is another district of Lancashire which it may be well to spend a moment in speaking of, and that is the district called the Forest of

Ripendale, containing some twenty-two or twenty-four square miles. In the early part of the sixteenth century there were only eighty persons living in this district, now there are more than 21,000. The land for farming purposes in that district now lets for ten times as much rent per year as it did 100 years ago, and there are men now living who can recollect the time when in their youth they farmed certain farms which are now paying seven or eight times as much rent as they were paying then. The district in which Liverpool is situated was formerly assessed to the land tax at £35,000 a year; its annual value now is £2,124,000 per annum, being an advance of more than 5,900 per cent. Liverpool 150 years ago was valued as a smaller place than Wigan. It was a mere fishing village some 200 years ago, and now is the largest seaport probably in the whole world. Now, who is it that has made this wonderful change in Lancashire, and what is it? (Cheers.) Is it the landed proprietors who have effected this change? (Cries of 'No, no.') Forty years ago, Dr. Whittaker, the antiquarian, in his history of Whalley, described the landed proprietors of Lancashire to be much in the same state that they had been for 200 years before. He says 'they are men fond of married life'—meaning a great deal of quiet and domestic comfort—'they are possessed of little curiosity or ambition; they reside much at home; they pursue domestic amusements, which are more gross than costly;' and he states that he 'met with only one literary character, who was possessed of the family estate.' Well, then, the landed proprietors, if they were men of this character, have not made Lancashire what it is. There are in that county a number of very old houses, and houses where the old families resided. These families are for the most part extinct. They have been succeeded by a new class of men, their mansions are now inhabited by thriving manufacturers, and the old families have been almost swept away from the southern division of the county. Not that there was any war against them, for they had the same chance as other men, 'but born to broad acres,' they did not think it necessary to cultivate their minds or use much exertion. Other men sprang up among them—the inventions of Watt and Arkwright gave these other men great opportunities which these men neglected to seize upon, and thus they who were once the magnates of that county are now nowhere to be found, and a new class of men have sprung up to lead the dense population. It is the industry, the intelligence, the perseverance, which have combined to make Lancashire what it is. Its minerals are invaluable, but they were underneath its surface for ages and for thousands of years past, and it was only in these latter days, and in the ranks of a new generation, that there were found men ready to bring them to light, and to transfer them into that wonderful machinery which some men so greatly despise—a machinery which is the agent by which the population of these districts stretch out their hands to every region of the earth, bring back the accumulated riches of every country, and pour them profusely into the laps of their own population. (Cheers.) And the little flaky substance which is taken from the pod of the cotton-tree, and which since seventy or eighty years ago was first imported into Lancashire, that is the material, the fibre upon which they have worked—that is the material which has given to that county its greatness and its grandeur. Lancashire, then, is the child of trade and industry, in their most remarkable and magnificent forms. That trade was not long ago an infant, struggling into life. It is now great and powerful, and in no longer period than suffices for the child to become a man it has sprung up into a giant of enormous proportions, and yet that giant, powerful as it is, lies well-nigh prostrate under the fetters and shackles which a benighted, ignorant, and thoughtless policy has formed around its muscular form." (Cheers.)

On the 29th of May Mr. Bright again attended the weekly meeting of the League in Covent Garden Theatre, intending merely to listen; but after Messrs. Holland and Cobden delivered their speeches there was a call from all parts of the Theatre for the member for Durham, as there was a desire to hear him. Mr. Bright's speech was short, and related chiefly to the result of a South Lancashire election: Mr. William Entwisle, a monopolist, having been returned to Parliament by a majority over Mr. Brown, a Free-trader.

In these days it was customary for societies, which were formed for "the promotion of industry," to give prizes annually to those agricultural labourers who might succeed in living for years without parochial relief. This was a most difficult matter, on account of the wretchedly low wages paid to them for their labour. In 1844 the South-east Hants Society gave a prize of £5 to a hard-working man named Coker, aged 39, a resident of Fareham, employed by Mr. H. P. Delme, for having supported eight children without parochial relief. A prize of £4 was awarded to David Gregory, aged 36, residing at Westmeon, who was in the employ of the Hon. T. W. Gage, for having supported eight children under fifteen years of age without relief, except during the time of his wife's confinement; £3 were given to William Ferris, of Fitchfield, aged 32, an *employé* of Mr. E. Norris, for having supported six children under thirteen years of age in similar circumstances. He had never been out of employment since he was seven years old. It was further stated in his favour that he was able to feed a pig every year, and contributed to a society which would undertake after his death to bury him decently. The wages of labourers in agricultural districts averaged seven or eight shillings per week. Struggle as they might, however, few spent their declining days out of the workhouse.

Mr. Cobden, in a speech delivered at Colchester, in reply to accusations made by land proprietors against manufacturers, said :—

"I do not like to be egotistical, but I like gentlemen to be informed of the true state of things in the manufacturing districts. I employ a great number of people; I have hundreds who are earning a good rate of wages. My able-bodied workmen receive each from 20s. to 30s. per week. I pay £600 per week in wages, which amounts to considerably more than £20,000 per annum. I can state this, that there are but two men in my employment—the one being blind, and the other a cripple—who are receiving less than 12s. per week. (Cheers.) You may ask, 'How long do they work?' I reply twelve hours per day; and if they work longer than that, they are paid for their trouble." (Cheers.)

On the 10th of June Mr. Ewart introduced a motion into the House of Commons to the effect that the duty on foreign sugar should be reduced to the same rate as the duty on colonial sugar. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden supported the motion; it, however, was lost, as there was a majority of 203 monopolists against it.

Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden took a trip down to Sussex, and two evenings after addressed a meeting in the fashionable town of Brighton, in the Town Hall, on the subject of Free-trade, and the utmost enthusiasm was manifested.

Mr. Villiers, on the 25th of June, brought on in the House

of Commons his annual motion for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden supported the motion, which was lost, 124 voting in its favour and 328 against it; yet the principles of Free-trade, it was evident, on comparison with the results of previous years, were growing in favour. Mr. Bright, in the course of his speech, said :—

“The right hon. baronet (Sir Robert Peel) has spoken of the predictions of my hon. friend (Mr. R. Cobden), the member for Stockport. That hon. gentleman is precisely the man of all others who has avoided hazarding predictions. He said, and every one who thoroughly understands the Corn Law said, that this country never could rise from the depression which so lately existed except through the repeal of the Corn Law, or that, through the bounty of Providence, we were again to be favoured with good harvests. The right hon. baronet owes his safety, as does the country, to the change in the seasons. What was the condition of the right hon. baronet some two years ago? How did he bear the weight of the responsibility of his office then? Was not his mind almost pressed down by the difficulties which surrounded him; and were not all the power and all the honours of his high office but a poor compensation for the cares which then pressed upon him? The condition of the country was such as to excite the liveliest apprehensions; and I am sure there is not a man in the kingdom more thankful for the change of the seasons than is the right hon. baronet.” (Hear, hear.)

The next weekly meeting of the League at Covent Garden Theatre was held on the 3rd of July. Mr. Bright’s speech on this occasion was lengthy, and concluded thus :—

“We ask that this wide earth, which the Creator of all things has spread as a table for his children, should be free to us to live in, and enjoy its abundance. (Cheers.) Why, to enjoy the good things which God has given is a great portion even of the obedience which we owe to Him! (Cheers.) Have we not proof—abundant proof—that those blessings were given for us, were bestowed richly for our use? That it is impious in any man, or any set of men, to withhold the products of the gifts of His bounteous hand, especially from the poorest of His creatures? (Cheers.) A writer, who was at once a monarch and a poet, in the voice of praise with which and in which he often addressed his Creator, said, in the words and lines which are familiar, doubtless, to you all, when gazing upon the beauty of the earth, and the abundance with which God hath filled it:—‘Thou visitest the earth and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.’ And not in this passage only, but in many other parts of the sacred Scriptures, you have full liberty to believe the earth was given for your enjoyment, and for the comfort of all the creatures whom Heaven has placed upon its surface.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright was at Portsmouth, the naval and military dépôt of the kingdom, on the 15th of July, and delivered a lengthy appeal to a large audience that had assembled in the Town Hall of that town.

On the 17th of July a meeting was held in the Town Hall, Gravesend, presided over by Mr. Henry Oaks. Mr. Bright spoke for an hour and three-quarters in a strain of earnest eloquence, which was frequently interrupted by bursts of acclamation.

In the House of Commons, on the 19th of July, Mr. Milner Gibson called attention to the subject of incendiarism in the eastern agricultural counties of England. This raised an animated discussion, in which Mr. John Bright took part. This speech was considered at that time to have been the most effective that he had yet delivered in the House of Commons:—

“The great and all-present evil of the rural districts is this—you have too many people for the work to be done, and you, the landed proprietors, are alone responsible for this state of things; and, to speak honestly, I believe many of you know it. I have been charged with saying out-of-doors that this House is a club of landowners legislating for landowners. If I had not said it, the public must long ago have found out that fact. My hon. friend the member for Stockport on one occasion proposed that before you passed a law to raise the price of bread you should consider how far you had the power to raise the rates of wages. What did you say to that? You said that the labourers did not understand political economy, or they would not apply to Parliament to raise wages; that Parliament could not raise wages, and yet the very next thing you did was to pass a law to raise the price of produce of your own land at the expense of the very class whose wages you confessed your inability to increase. (Hear, hear.) What is the conditions of the county of Suffolk? Is it not notorious that the rents are as high as they were fifty years ago, and probably much higher? But the return for the farmer's capital is much lower, and the condition of the labourer is very much worse. The farmers are subject to the law of competition, and rents are thereby raised from time to time so as to keep their profits down at the lowest point, and the labourers by the competition amongst them are reduced to the point below which life cannot be maintained. Your tenants and labourers are being devoured by this excessive competition, whilst you, their magnanimous landlords, shelter yourselves from all competition by the Corn Law yourselves have passed, and make the competition of all other classes serve still more to swell your rentals. It was for this object the Corn Law was passed, and yet in the face of your countrymen you dare to call it a law for the protection of native industry. . . . Again, ‘a rural police is kept up by the gentry, the farmers say, for the sole use of watching game and frightening poachers, for which formerly they had to pay watchers.’ Is this true, or is it not? I say, then, you care everything for the rights—and for something beyond the rights—of your own property, but you are oblivious to its duties. How many lives have been sacrificed during the past year to the childish infatuation of preserving game? The noble lord, the member for North Lancashire, could tell of a gamekeeper killed in an affray on his father's estate in that county. For the offence one man was hanged, and four men are now on their way to penal colonies. Six families are thus deprived of husband and father that this wretched system of game-preserving may be continued in a county densely peopled as this is. (Hear, hear.) The Marquis of Normanby's gamekeeper has been murdered also, and the poacher who shot him only escaped death by the intervention of the Home Secretary. At Godalming, in Surrey, a gamekeeper has been murdered; and at Buckhill, in Buckinghamshire, a person has recently been killed in a poaching affray. This insane system is the cause of a fearful loss of life; it tends to the ruin of your tenantry, and is the fruitful cause of the demoralisation of the peasantry. But you are caring for the rights of property; for its most obvious duties you have no concern. With such a policy what can you expect but that which is now passing before you? It is the remark of a beautiful writer that ‘to have known nothing but misery is the most portentous condition under which human nature can start on its course.’ Has your agricultural labourer ever known anything but misery? He is born in a miserable hovel, which in mockery is termed a house or a home; he is reared in penury; he passes a life of hopeless and unrequited toil, and the gaol or the union house is before him as the only asylum on this side of the pauper's grave. Is this the result of your protection to native industry? Have you cared for the labourer till, from a home of comfort, he has but a hovel for shelter? and have you cherished him into starvation and rags? I tell you what your boasted protection is—it is a protection of native idleness at the expense of the impoverishment of native industry.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright was again at Northampton on the 5th of August, in compliance with a requisition signed by 1,200 agriculturists and manufacturers, who invited him and his friend, Mr. Cobden, to attend a meeting in that town, on the question of Free-trade. Although it was harvest time, when the sturdy mower's "sweeping scythe ripped along," and "prostrated the waving treasure," still the farmers in this district found time to hold this meeting. A commodious husting had been erected in the Market Place, and about 6,000 persons were present. Mr. Grundy occupied the chair. Mr. Feargus O'Connor was present on behalf of the Chartists, and proposed an amendment to Mr. Cobden's resolution in favour of Free-trade. Mr. Bright refuted at great length the fallacies of Mr. O'Connor, and the meeting carried the resolution by a majority.

The inhabitants of the ancient town of Walsall, which was once possessed by "King-making Warwick," held a meeting on the 11th of September to do honour to Mr. J. B. Smith, of Manchester, who in the year 1841 had offered himself as a candidate for that town, and contested its representation on behalf of the principles of Free-trade, not, however, successfully. Mr. Robert Scott, M.P., presided. Mr. Smith on this occasion was presented with a splendid salver, "as a testimonial of their gratitude and esteem for the patriotic and spirited manner in which he contested the representation of the borough against a monopolist and bread-taxer." Mr. Bright was present and took part in the meeting.

The League opened their winter campaign of agitation in Manchester by one of the most crowded meetings, in the Free Trade Hall, on the evening of the 25th of October, 1844. Mr. Cobden first addressed the meeting.

"We may derive consolation and delight," remarked Mr. Bright, "from witnessing how beautifully, how harmoniously, the seasons are working round to carry conviction to the whole country and the world, that every principle which we have propounded on this question is well founded, and that experience constantly confirms it. (Applause.) We read of an invader and a usurper of old, that the stars in their course fought against him, and may we not say also, with respect to those who invade the rights, the dearest rights of the population of this country, who usurp a power to which they have no just title, the power of feeding, or, if need be, of starving a great empire—(cheers)—may we not say that the seasons have fought against them, and that each succeeding year, as it rolls over us, is but weakening their power, and strengthening that public opinion which we are rallying as fast as we are able for the overthrow of the worst species of tyranny with which any country was ever cursed. (Cheers.) We are entering the seventh year of our labours in this great cause, and there may be some who at the thought of this despond. If there be any who have a right to despond, or who might be forgiven if they feel faint-hearted, it is surely those who have laboured hard in this cause; but so far as the council of the League are concerned, I can state to this meeting and the public that there was never a time when they were more convinced than they are now that they were right in the beginning and are right still, and that in their cause, as in all others, right must speedily triumph. (Cheers.) . . . They (the monopolists)

said that manufactures were subject to great fluctuations. Well, that is quite true, in this country, so far as our experience of the last thirty years goes, and so far as our experience of the period before that goes. But then the time before the last thirty years was almost a continual course of war, which ever interfered with the regular course of industry; and since the war the Corn Law has also interfered with the regular course of industry; and we have no proof whatever that any such fluctuations as we have suffered arose from the nature of things, but rather from the violent interference with the nature of things which has been inflicted upon us by war in one case, and by legislative interference in the other. (Cheers.) . . . The very first time the Manchester Chamber of Commerce met, or the very first time that the association which afterwards became the Anti-Corn-Law League met, the Corn Law was pointed out as the cause of the distress, and we have never varied a hairbreadth on the point from that time to this. (Cheers.) Well, the distress has abated, and the Corn Law is not repealed; and, therefore, my argument with respect to the monopolist excuses might be turned against me; but we have always said that if we had good harvests, by which food could be abundant and cheap, or if we have a repeal of the Corn Law, by which food could be abundant and cheap, then the distress would abate. We have not had a repeal of the Corn Law, but we have had abundant harvests, and that is tantamount to a temporary abolition or a great relaxation of the Corn Law, and under this the distress has abated and prosperity has returned. (Cheers.) The Providence which has given us two or three good harvests may give us one or two or three more; but we must bear in mind that the course of the seasons cannot be changed to suit the caprice, the folly, or the criminality of human legislation. (Cheers.) . . . I often wonder why it is that men are so willing to bow their necks to men who are ornamented with stars and garters, and titles; for I am sure the more I come in contact with these characters, the more I come to the conclusion that it is something far beyond titles which constitutes true nobility of character. (Cheers.) And there is not any creature that crawls the earth, to my mind, more despicable and more pitiable than the man who sacrifices the interests of his own class, of his own order, and of his own country, merely that he may toady somebody who has a title to his name. (Cheers.) He should recollect—

Fitley his ill-woven chaplet wears,
Full often wreathed around the miscreant brow ;'

and that there are men in the peerage of every country who are greatly to be despised, as there are some worthy to be honoured to the utmost, from whose hearts their high rank has not driven away all sympathy with the rights and interests of their fellow-men." (Cheers.)

CHAPTER XX.

THE LABOUR OF THE LEAGUE CONTINUED.

Bright and Cobden at Rochdale, Wakefield, London, Pontefract, Preston, Chorley, Manchester, Durham.

A SCORNFUL reluctance to set about mastering the state of facts, a presumptuous confidence in men's own security, and a disposition to deride and reject every admonition at variance with their desires and expectations, have hitherto been considered and handed down as among the most signal forerunners of a national calamity. Ill fared the land, as 1844 was drawing to a close, for

“Famine stalk'd raving through her silent streets,
And stern oppression drew closer the galling chains.”

Side by side with the most exuberant wealth there was to be found the most deplorable indigence. The Protectionists heeded not the warnings of Mr. Bright, although events occurred as he had predicted, thus showing that he could, as it were, fathom the secrets of futurity.

On the 20th of November, 1844, a meeting was held in the Public Hall, Rochdale, and Mr. George Wilson was in the chair. So large was the attendance that there was scarcely room enough to accommodate all with ease. The chairman in the course of his speech said :—

“We have devoted years of labour—we have spared no means, no time, no expense—in order that every person should acquire a useful and comprehensive knowledge of the subject with which we profess to deal. We have sacrificed private friendships; we have given up the useful employments and occupations of men in the same station of life with ourselves; we have appealed to men in the agricultural districts; the doctrines of Free-trade have never been modified to suit the views of this or that politician—they have been maintained in open argument and open debate by my friends on the left (Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright) in open-air country meetings; in every one of those meetings, except one, the decision has been against monopoly.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Cobden, Mr. Wm. Brown, and Mr. Bright addressed the meeting. Mr. Bright in speaking of the decay of the woollen trade in Rochdale, as a consequence of protection, said, had it not been that another trade, cotton, had been introduced there, which was almost entirely an export trade, the town and district would have gone to ruin. The woollen manufacturers

were now almost all going into the cotton trade. Why? Not because they liked it better; but there was no field for them in their own trade, one half of which had been cut off by the American tariff. Mr. Sharman Crawford also spoke on the question of Free-trade.

Messrs. Bright and Cobden on the evening of the 3rd of December were in Huddersfield Guild Hall, advocating the cause of the League. The next day they delivered speeches at Leeds, in the Music Hall, to a large number of persons.

They returned to London on the 11th of December, and were present at a League meeting in Covent Garden Theatre in the evening. Boxes, pit, gallery, and stage were crowded. The Hon. C. P. Villiers was the first gentleman called upon by the chairman, Mr. J. Wilson, to address the meeting. Mr. Cobden followed, and then Mr. Bright spoke.

"Yes," said Mr. Bright, "freedom is Heaven's first gift to man. It is his heritage; he has it by charter from Heaven, and, although it has struggled so long, this principle is still living, breathing, growing, and every day increasing in strength. (Cheers.) The infant of our fathers' day has become the giant of our own time. An American poet, speaking of liberty and its struggles, says:—

'Power at thee has launch'd
His bolts, and with his lightnings smitten thee;
They could not quench the life thou hast from Heaven.
Merciless power has dug thy dungeon deep,
And his swart armourers, by a thousand fires,
Have forged thy chain.'

But liberty still survives, is indestructible, and man shall yet enjoy its blessings. But, bear in mind that, precious and excellent as this liberty is, there are certain conditions upon which alone it can be obtained and secured. You must rely upon yourselves for it. Liberty is too precious and sacred a thing ever to be entrusted to the keeping of another man. Be the guardians of your own rights and liberties; if you be not, you will have no protectors but spoilers of all that you possess." (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

Messrs. Bright and Cobden were down at a meeting in Bradford on the 13th of December, and four days after they addressed a gathering in the Mechanics' Institute, Wakefield, with the object of trying to improve the register for the West Riding of Yorkshire.

A Free-trade banquet was held in Farringdon Hall, Snow Hill, London, on the 16th of December, and Mr. Bright was one of the guests. Mr. John Buckmaster officiated as chairman. Mr. J. Pattison, M.P., Dr. Lynch, and Mr. John Bright were the principal speakers on the occasion.

"I have been more or less connected with it (the League) from the first," said Mr. Bright, "and have been intimately acquainted with its proceedings from that time to this. Year after year I have witnessed its growth and watched its increasing strength, until at this moment I may say—without any of that partiality which, perhaps, from my identification with it, I might be excused for feeling—that I am

quite certain there is no political or other question which at this moment has obtained one tithe of the attention in Great Britain which Free-trade now commands." (Cheers.)

The inhabitants of the manufacturing town of Keighley had the pleasure of listening to Mr. Bright in their Mechanics' Institute on the 20th of December, and gave him an enthusiastic reception.

Mr. Cobden again joined Mr. Bright on the 23rd of December, and proceeded to the clean and handsome town of Pontefract, famed for its gardens and nurseries, and associated with some of the greatest events in English history. The meeting was held in the Town Hall, and the then mayor, Mr. John Phillips, was the chairman. They continued their journey in Yorkshire, and came to Cleckheaton on the 27th of December. About 700 of the inhabitants congregated in the Concert Room in the afternoon to listen to them. In the evening of the same day they addressed an equally numerous assembly in a schoolroom in the manufacturing town of Batley.

On the second day in January, 1845, they were at a meeting in the Corn Exchange, Preston, where 500 of the inhabitants listened attentively to them. Two days after, they arrived at Warrington, a town said to be the oldest in Lancashire, and amongst the first to manufacture cotton. A meeting was held in the evening in a room adjoining the Lion Hotel, and 600 persons were present. This was considered the largest gathering that had been held in that town on the question of Free-trade and the registration movement.

Mr. Bright, accompanied by Mr. Prentice, was at Chorley, at a meeting in the old Wesleyan Chapel, on the 6th of January, and the facts and arguments brought forward by both of them in their speeches made a deep impression on their audience.

Mr. Cobden next joined Mr. Bright at a meeting in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, on the 8th of January. The body of the hall and the galleries, as well as the platform, were thronged with people of a respectable station in society. Both of them delivered lengthy speeches. Next day they addressed the inhabitants of Wigan, in a large room adjoining the Buck i' th' Vine Hotel. The day following they spoke in the Baptist Chapel, Bramley, Yorkshire, to an audience which chiefly had been attracted from the surrounding villages. On the 13th of January, 1,300 of the inhabitants of Blackburn assembled in a schoolroom under St. James' Chapel, and listened to their speeches.

On the 15th of January Mr. Bright was amongst his constituents, giving them an account of his stewardship. The

meeting was held in the Theatre, Sadler Street, Durham, and the whole building was crowded; Mr. John Henderson, of Leazes House, acted as chairman. When Mr. Bright appeared upon the stage he was received with reiterated bursts of cheering, manifestations of approbation that were renewed again and again. He spoke for an hour and three-quarters. Mr. John Branwell moved, and Mr. John Marshall seconded, and the meeting carried unanimously the following resolution:—"That the able review which has been given this evening by the hon. member for this city of his Parliamentary conduct is highly satisfactory to this meeting; that his conduct in Parliament entitles him to the warmest thanks of his constituency, and that the meeting and the constituency feel perfect confidence in the course which he will pursue in the proud situation in which he is placed as the member for this borough."

The annual meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League was held on the 22nd of January in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. The platform, the body of the hall, and the galleries were crowded. Mr. Edward Baines, of Leeds, Mr. Lawrence Heyworth, of Liverpool, Mr. T. M. Gibson, M.P., and Mr. John Bright, addressed the meeting.

"The tendency and object of all Corn Law legislation of late years has been the same—to plunder the industry of the country by creating an artificial famine, and thereby to enrich the great proprietors of the soil, and those who call themselves the nobility of the land. (Loud cheers.) When the Law was passed in 1815, £4 a quarter was fixed as the price of wheat; now the price is 45s. a quarter, only a little more than half. (Hear, hear.) Now, we think £4 a quarter a famine price. It was a famine price then; the law intended that it should be perpetual; but only two years since that time have witnessed the price of wheat so high as 80s. In 1817 and 1818 the Act-of-Parliament-famine-price was reached, and those years were years of great distress and discontent, and menaced insurrection in all the densely-populated districts of the kingdom. (Cheers.) But the Corn Law intended that, from 1815 to 1845, or as long as it should last, the famine price should be kept in view, and should be attained if possible, the object of these men had only this limit—'Get as near to that price always as it may be safe to go. (Loud cheers.) Get all out of the industry of the country that the industrious classes will bear quietly. (Hear, hear.) Don't mind starving a few of the poor, who will go down to premature graves, and their voices will not be heard amongst the strife of parties and the contentions for political power.' (Cheers.) This Corn Law has no mercy in it, and its framers had none. (Cheers.) There have been periods when distress has not extensively prevailed. We are now passing through one of them, but it is not by the mercy of the Corn Law that we are not now plunged into utter desolation. (Cheers.) . . . In 1842 we held a bazaar in this town, which realised the sum of £10,000, more, I believe, by some thousands than was ever before received from any bazaar in this country, however great and noble were the patrons and patronesses. (Cheers.) In 1843 we realised a subscription of £50,000, and that was done with the greatest ease. (Cheers.) In 1844 the subscription of £100,000 was asked for, and you have heard from the report that about £82,000 or £83,000 have been received, although one of the greatest means by which it was to have been collected has not yet been employed. (Hear, hear.) . . . Thirty years' protection has left some 800,000 or 900,000 of your countrymen, agricultural labourers, for the most part paupers, hopeless and reckless. (Hear, hear.) We now find, on inquiry into the conditions of these districts, that the very population who, our opponents said, supported our home trade and supported the revenue,

buy almost no clothing, and consume almost no excisable articles. We find that these labourers are helpless amidst their wrongs. Protection to them has been of a sort which they dread almost to think of. If I were to be asked of its results, I would say :—

“’Tis to see their children weak,
With their mothers pine and peak,
While the wintry winds are bleak,—
They are dying whilst I speak.

“’Tis to hunger for such diet,
As the rich man in his riot,
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye.’

(Cheers.) This is the protection the Corn Law has given to rural labourers, and I appeal to themselves and their actual condition for the truth of the statement. (Cheers.) And the farmers are just about as helpless. There is a case to prove it. Ninety-nine farmers out of every hundred in the kingdom are altogether against the Game Law, that is notorious, and yet there are not ten farmers in the district who dare meet to denounce that Law in the face of the landlords.” (Cheers.)

About 1,000 of the inhabitants of Bury again assembled in the Brunswick school on the 20th of January to hear addresses from Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden. Mr. R. Walker, M.P., presided.

On the 8th of February the legislative session was opened, and Mr. Cobden called the attention of the House of Commons to the fact that on former occasions, when the agricultural districts were in a state of distress, the circumstance was usually adverted to in the Speech from the Throne at the opening of the Session ; on the present occasion it was not. Mr. J. Bright followed in a powerful speech. His contrast between protected Buckinghamshire and unprotected Lancashire was masterly, and his pictures of the agricultural labourer and the straits of the tenant farmer, all caused by protection, fell with withering effect.

The second metropolitan meeting for the year was held in Covent Garden, on the 19th of February, and so crowded was the building that hundreds of persons were unable to gain admittance. Mr. Bright was one of the speakers.

CHAPTER XXI.

OPPOSITION TO THE GAME AND CORN LAWS.

Mr. Bright's Committee to inquire into the Game Laws—Mr. Cobden and the Distress—Mr. Bright and the Tenant Farmers of Hertfordshire—The Anti-Corn-Law Bazaar in London—The Distress at Hereford and Newton—Mr. Bright at Sunderland assisting Col. Thompson at an Election Contest.

FOR many years Mr. Bright had devoted considerable attention to the Game Laws, and, in moving in the House of Commons, on the 27th of February, for a Select Committee to inquire into them, he delivered a speech which occupied two hours and a-half. Throughout the whole of this period he commanded constant and unbounded attention, and was interrupted only by the cheers that broke out from all sides. He presented an array of facts and figures, lucidly arranged, which could not be resisted. His sturdy hate of wrong and unaffected sympathy for the suffering which these laws had brought upon the poor and the defenceless, gave to his arguments a tone and colouring of rich feeling, which made them as touching to the heart as they were convincing to the head. At one portion the county gentlemen forgot themselves, when Mr. Bright was censuring the butchery of game, called a *battue*, and ridiculed the idea that the abolition of the Game Laws would render residence in the country unattractive. He pictured the real dignity of a landowner residing on his estate in the midst of his tenantry, having within his command so much power of doing good, and so many sources of natural amusement. Charmed with the strain, the country gentlemen were captivated, and cheered lustily; and when Mr. Bright concluded his speech, the members acknowledged his mastery of the subject by cheering, and there was a general assent to the appointment of a committee.

Mr. Bright was present at the monthly meeting of the League in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, on the 6th of March; but he did not deliver a speech to the gathering, which numbered 6,000 people. Mr. W. J. Fox addressed the meeting eloquently, and thus concluded:—

“There is the security of enlightened determination—a security as great as that of cause and effect in the material creation. The sun and the moon once stood still to accommodate an army; Cobden and Bright will not stand still to accommodate a Government. (Tremendous cheering.) Onward, still onward, is their word,

whether it be in this mode of action or in that. (Cheers.) You will hold your meetings, you will register your votes, you will circulate your tracts, you will send out your lecturers. (Cheers.) Whether you will petition Parliament or abstain from petitioning; whether you cultivate the constituencies of counties or of boroughs; whether you subscribe your money, or whether you exhibit manufacturing productions, still your tendency is the same. It is working right onwards to the great and blessed end—a working onward with a power like that of the mighty elements of Nature—unresting, invisible or visible, welcome or unwelcome to mortals, judged rightly or wrongly; still they form their combinations, still they go on, the sun shining by day and the moon and stars by night, maturing the richness of the varied seasons; and, like them, your moral energy will fulfil its work—a great power of nature, also, of our inward and spiritual being, which shall combine with all the elemental influences of heaven and earth to declare the glory of God, and to ensure the well-being of humanity.” (Cheers.)

On the 20th of March Mr. Cobden, in the House of Commons, moved for a committee to inquire into the causes of the alleged existing agricultural distress, and into the effects of legislative protection upon the interests of the landowners, tenant-farmers, and farm-labourers. The monopolists said very little in opposition, but voted stolidly and doggedly against the inquiry, and the motion was lost. Mr. Bright told them that at agricultural meetings they could speak out most valiantly, but in the House they were mute. Surely it was no enviable reputation they were thus acquiring—that of being great in the field and little in the Senate.

A large number of tenant-farmers presented Mr. John Horncastle, a farmer, residing at Gammor Farm, with a testimonial, on the 26th of March, for having opposed the very stringent measures for the preservation of game adopted by his landlord, the Earl of Essex, on his estate at Hertfordshire, and who had in consequence received notice to quit his farm. A meeting was held at St. Albans, and about 120 farmers were present. Mr. Bright was invited by the committee, and upon entering the room was loudly cheered. Mr. C. H. Latimore, of Wheathampstead presided. Mr. Bright in the course of a lengthy speech, said :—

“Get rid of this infamous trifling with the interests of the farmer; do not let the amusements of a small class be put in competition not only with the prosperity, but with the very existence of a much larger class. (Cheers.) Let us get a system of farming, of agreements, of management, from one end of it to the other, placed on the same understandable, rational, business-like footing, and then we shall have landowners respected because they are just and tenants independent because they are prosperous. (Cheers.) . . . The committee appointed to inquire into the Game Laws meet next week for the first time, for evidence. (Cries of “We wish you success.”) I have had an amount of correspondence which it is almost impossible to get through. I have written for the last fortnight or three weeks not unfrequently from thirty to fifty letters a day, nearly all of which have been to persons connected, more or less, with the cultivation of the soil, and having reference to the question of game. . . . There are farmers who yet believe that I am their enemy, inasmuch as I have been prominently connected with the agitation of another question. It may be that these farmers are right and that I am wrong. I believe that they are honest; I am quite sure that I am. (Cheers.) Upon the question we must agree to differ until one or the

other be converted. (Laughter.) I trust that all discussion upon it may be carried on in a rational and kindly spirit, such as becomes men who wish only for the truth, and then I am quite sure that the time is not far distant when that which is true will be discovered, and not only discovered, but established. (Hear, hear.) But upon this question of the game, ninety-nine farmers out of every hundred would shake hands and agree with me entirely. (Cries of "All, all.") What I want farmers henceforth to do is this, to take nothing upon credit. (Cheers.) I would not take anything for granted. Do not believe anything that I say, or which my friend Mr. Cobden may utter (cheers); do not for a moment think it worth anything until you have reasoned it out and examined the facts, and made yourself sure, but apply the same rule to the landowners." (Cheers.)

Many of the farmers present at the meeting regarded the presence of Mr. Bright with misgiving. They had listened to the landlords' aspersions of the League, and they did not feel absolutely certain that there was not a little truth in the political landlord's assertion that the Free-traders sought to advance the interests of their own class at the expense of the industrious agriculturists. But Mr. Bright had not spoken twenty sentences before these doubts and misgivings cleared away like mists before the sun. His earnest, direct, and business-like reasoning, carried conviction to their minds that he was in the right.

On the 30th of March, Mr. Bright presented to the House of Commons a petition signed by ninety-two tenant-farmers of the county of Edinburgh. This petition deprecated the Game Laws, and prayed that every tenant-farmer might have the right to kill game, and that rabbits might be his own property.

A bazaar got up to raise funds on behalf of the Anti-Corn-Law League was opened in Covent Garden Theatre on the 8th of May, and 400 ladies were the saleswomen. For several months many of the male and female members of the league had been busy making arrangements for the bazaar, and the result was that specimen products of every variety of industry from every part of the United Kingdom were collected together. Long rows of tables extended away into the dim distance—two in the centre, and one on each side. They were piled with rich merchandise, curiosities, miracles of art, and wonders of nature. The bulkiest and costliest products of the loom, the forge, and the steam-engine were to be seen as well as the fairy-like creations of woman's exquisite fancy, and delicate handiwork, all giving testimony of a nation's idea and purpose, and protesting against a great wrong. All that surrounded the visitor was an eloquent, though silent, proclamation of the resolute determination of the people. The doom of the Corn Laws was here written in distinct characters. The scene gave the impression that a cause which had elicited so many myriads of voluntary offerings had passed that period in its history when

the least doubt remained of its ultimate triumph. It set the stamp of success on the labours of seven years, and gave assurance of a moral force and conviction, which were now travelling like the light of heaven. The spirit which had animated this mass of sustained and concentrated exertion was a spirit that no opposition could subdue, no failure dishearten, and no delay tire out. The contributions from most of the important towns occupied separate stalls, and occasionally the arms of a civic corporation appeared. Triumphs of manufacturing industry and skill were to be seen on every hand. Some of the most interesting and beautiful processes of our national manufactures were shown in actual operation. For seventeen days there was a continual flow of visitors, and the proceedings thus begun with business ended in festivity and with mutual congratulations on the success of the gigantic scheme. Jullien and his band were engaged for the occasion, and the entertainment was a kind of promenade concert. The amount realised, according to Prentice's "History of the League," exceeded £20,000 for admission and sales, independent of about £5,000 in money contributions from various localities, and of the unsold goods, which were reserved to stock a bazaar to be held at a later period in Manchester.

On the 10th of June Mr. Villiers brought on his annual motion—the total and unqualified repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. Bright's speech on this occasion was lengthy. He said that in the street in which he lived he was delighted every day with the song of a lark, which sung as if it were not in a cage, and a boy every week, for a halfpenny, brought the lark a piece of green turf; thus, on the principle of supply and demand was that bird supplied with an article so essential to its comfort; and that was the principle on which the monarch in the palace was supplied—on which the highest and the lowest received their supplies, and they may rest assured that there was no principle of supply so secure as that which was allowed to regulate itself by the wants of the community. Many members of that House might not know of a famine price of corn, but to the poor man there was in this country still, periodically, a famine and starvation price of corn, as if God had visited the earth with sterility, and afflicted this country with one of those terrible disasters which they read of as having taken place hundreds of years ago. But it was not a famine of that nature; the famine was caused by the legislation of that House, and it was high time that the extraordinary imposition which caused it should come to an end.

The division showed a diminution in the monopolists' majority, as compared with the previous year, of 72 votes, and of 170 votes as compared with 1842.

Mr. Cobden, in one of his speeches, argued that the monopolists would vote for the abolition of the Corn Laws, if Hansard did not stop the way, which recorded their casual, careless, foolish expressions of by-gone years, and they did not like to admit that they were wiser than in previous years. They were afraid of saying what they knew was true, and of doing what they knew was right; and all because somebody might open a dusty book, and read musty and forgotten speeches to prove them inconsistent. For himself he was willing to burn Hansard, and all the debates that had taken place, in order to allow monopolists to adopt a new course of policy, dictated by their present convictions.

At the League's meeting in Covent Garden Theatre on the 18th of June, several foreigners were present, and amongst the rest the celebrated American poet, Mr. W. C. Bryant. Mr. Cobden was the first speaker.

"I am not one who pays much undue regard to authority," said Mr. Bright on that occasion; "that is, to the opinion and sentiments of men who have lived before us. I think we are foolish if we disregard what they have left us which is wise; but it would be no less foolish if we were to throw away the lessons of our own experience, and go back to rely only on that which they have left us. I will quote the opinion of a man who is held in great esteem by many who widely differ from us, a statesman who is acknowledged to have been a far-seeing one, and whose eloquence and power in the Senate, and as a writer, were, perhaps, never surpassed. Burke says of this very question—'monopoly is contrary to natural right; Free-trade is the same thing as free use of property.' We have maintained often on this stage, and in every part of the kingdom, that the poorest man in this realm has as much right to his labour, and to the whole of its proceeds, as any man who wears a coronet, or rules with undisputed sway over half a country. (Cheers.) . . . We had a Parliamentary Committee whose evidence, taken in 1836, gives us some light on this subject. Out of nearly forty farmers examined, thirty, I think, or more, declared that never in their lifetime had they known a period when the labourers on the farms received as much in return for their labour as they did at that period of low prices. We know that from 1838 to 1842 poor-rates were constantly increasing in the agricultural counties, able-bodied pauperism was gradually increasing, and there was a state of things arising which foretold a greater evil than Free-trade to squires and lords who are owners of the soil. (Hear, hear.) Well, then, what is the case now? I have had an opportunity lately of seeing a great many farmers. I generally have a sort of levée three days a week, from about nine o'clock in the morning until about twelve; and I see some of the most intelligent farmers that come up from the country. They come up either to discuss matters connected with the game question, or to give evidence on the game committee; and they tell me—I may state only what they say in private, because what they say before the committee is not to be told until it is printed for the use of the country—but they tell me, and I think one and all of them would admit, that the condition of the agricultural labourer in their employ is now much more satisfactory than it was four, or five, or six years ago. . . . Sir Robert Peel came from the very county where the League had its origin; and his fortune was made out of those little delicate fibres of cotton which are destined yet to revolutionise and change the face of things in this country. He sprang from commerce; and, until he has proved it himself, I will never believe that there is any man—much less will I believe that he

is the man—who would go down to his grave having had the power to deliver that commerce, and yet not having the manliness, honesty, and courage to do it.” (Cheers.)

To give the reader an idea of the condition of some of the working class at this particular period, it may be stated that in the fertile district of Wheathamstead, Herefordshire, in the month of June, 1845, 200 families literally littered like cattle, destitute of the means by which the decencies of life can be maintained, and compelled to resort to the rude shifts of savage life in the midst of civilisation. This was the result of thirty years of agricultural protection.

At Newton, which is situated on the beautiful Wilton estate, there was a house which was not intended to hold at most more than two families, as it consisted only of two lower apartments and two upper; nevertheless, it was the home of fifty human beings. When the census was taken in 1831, the straw in the building had to be removed, in order to ascertain the number of children that slept in it. The water from the road ran into the lower apartments, and the inmates were continually wet; and so demoralised were they, that they would not wash themselves for months together. At last disease carried them off to premature graves, where the weary are at rest.

Mr. Bright paid a visit again to Sunderland on the 26th of August, and addressed a highly respectable and numerous meeting of the electors of that town in the Athenæum, on the principles of Free-trade, and in favour of the election of Col. Thompson, who at that time was one of the candidates for the vacant seat of Sunderland. Mr. George Hudson, of railway notoriety, offered himself as a candidate on behalf of the Tories. Two days after, during his stay in Sunderland, Mr. Bright also wrote an interesting letter, which was published and distributed to the electors. In it he stated:—

“About ten years ago, during the years 1835 and 1836, the state of the country was very prosperous. The harvests had been good, and the price of food was very moderate; trade was brisk and employment plentiful, and the working and trading classes were content. In 1838 the harvests failed, the price of food rose rapidly, and this state of things continued up to the harvest of 1842, which was tolerably good; and prices from that time to this have fallen and been again moderate, indicating that plenty has taken the place of scarcity. During the five years from 1838 to 1842 the price of wheat averaged 64s. per quarter, and during the last twelve months the price has been about 45s. per quarter. The high prices were the result of the Corn Laws, which prevented our buying food abroad to make up for the short supply at home. Now, what was the effect of this scarcity on the comforts of the people? The facts to which I ask your special attention are taken from Government returns, and relate to the statistics of emigration, crime, and morality. It may be concluded that when emigration is rapidly on the increase there is some extraordinary pressure on the population at home; and it is notorious that crime is most frequent among the poor, and increases with increasing poverty; and it is obvious that life is shortest amongst the poorest classes, with whom plenty of wholesome food, warm clothing,

and shelter, are the exceptions and not the rule. The emigration returns show us that the number of persons forsaking their native land and seeking refuge in foreign countries, increased rapidly as the pressure of distress became more severe. They were as follows :—

Year.						
1838	...	...	...	...	33,222	persons emigrated.
1839	...	...	...	...	62,207	" "
1840	..	...	...	...	90,473	" "
1841	...	...	...	...	118,592	" "
1842	...	...	...	...	128,344	" "
1843	...	...	...	...	57,212	" "

It will be observed that during the years of high prices of food, from 1838 to 1842, the number of emigrants was rapidly increasing; but that when prices came down and food became cheaper, in 1843, the tide of emigration was checked. In 1842, 128,344 persons left their native land, and this fell to 57,212 in the following year. The facts relating to crime are as follows :—The number of commitments were in England and Wales :—

Year.						Commitments.
In 1837	...	...	...	...	...	23,612
" 1838	...	...	...	...	...	23,094
" 1839	...	...	...	...	...	24,443
" 1840	...	...	...	...	...	27,187
" 1841	...	...	...	...	...	27,760
" 1842	...	...	...	...	...	31,309
" 1843	...	...	...	...	...	29,591
" 1844	...	...	...	...	...	26,542

Thus the number of offences against the laws was rapidly increasing from 1838 to 1842, rising from 23,094 up to 31,309; and two years of moderate prices of food have brought them down from 31,309 in 1842 to 26,542 in 1844; and the returns from Scotland show similar results.

The tables of mortality are equally striking. I have the particulars of nine districts in the county of Lancaster in 1840, a year of high prices, as compared with 1843, a year of moderate prices :—

	1840.	1843.
Bolton	2,900	2,576 deaths.
Bury	2,170	1,832 "
Rochdale	1,688	1,532 "
Preston	2,637	1,938 "
Blackburn	2,140	2,031 "
Wigan	2,144	1,832 "
Prescot	1,155	920 "
Manchester	6,489	6,283 "
Ashton	4,873	4,391 "
Total	26,196	23,335 "

Thus, in 1840, a year of scarcity and dearth, there died in these nine districts 26,196 persons; whilst in 1843, a year of plenty and cheapness, but with an increased population, there died only 23,335 persons, being a difference of 2,861 deaths.

Now, if emigration only had increased, or crime only had increased, or if mortality only had extended its ravages, we might have hesitated as to the cause; but when all these increase greatly at the same time, and that time is one when food is made scarce and dear by law, then I think we are justified in believing that there is some intimate connection between that law and the suffering and criminality and mortality amongst the people. And which is the class of people thus afflicted and desolated by the periodical famine created by the Corn Law? Not the rich and comfortable class, scarcely, even, the middle class, but the artisan and labouring class—the poorest, of course, must be the greatest sufferers. I submit to you the following proposition :—1st—When food is scarce and dear, the pressure of distress increases. Emigration is more common, and foreign lands afford the refuge which our country

refuses to a portion of its population. At the same time morality and honesty are on the decline, and offences against the laws are frightfully on the increase. The same period is likewise marked by the ravages of death, and human life is sacrificed on the altar of famine. 2nd—The Corn Law was passed and is maintained to keep up the price of food by making food scarce, and by bringing the population of our country to the verge of famine whenever our own harvests are deficient. 3rd—The tendency, then, of the Corn Law is to create famine, to compel emigration, to tempt men to crime, and to bring down men, women, and children to a premature grave."

Notwithstanding these plain facts, the people of Sunderland returned Mr. Hudson to Parliament by a large majority, the chief reason being the want of unity in the Liberal party and the consequent neutrality of a large portion of the Liberal electors.

CHAPTER XXII.

INIQUITY OF THE GAME LAWS EXPOSED.

Mr. Cobden's Pecuniary Difficulties—The Inquiry into the Game Laws—Scene between Bright and Grantley Berkeley.

ALTHOUGH in 1836 the nett profit of Cobden's business amounted to £23,000 for that year, it gradually decreased, chiefly on account of neglect—his attention being absorbed with the objects of the Anti-Corn-Law League. In September, 1845, so serious was his pecuniary position that, after much painful consideration, he resolved to abandon public affairs, and devote his time to his commercial business. He at once wrote a letter to his friend, Mr. Bright, who at that time was at Inverness. Mr. Bright promptly replied :—

MY DEAR COBDEN,—I received your letter on the 15th, yesterday evening, on my arrival here. Its contents have made me more sad than I can express ; it seems as if this untoward event contained within it an affliction personal for myself, great public loss, a heavy blow to one for whom I feel a sincere friendship, and not a little danger to the great cause in which we have been fellow-labourers. I would return home without a day's delay if I had a valid excuse for my sisters, who are here with me. We have now been out nearly three weeks, and may possibly be as much longer before we reach home ; our plan being pretty well chalked out beforehand, I don't see how I can greatly change it without giving a sufficient reason. But it does not appear needful that you should take any hasty step in the matter. Too much is at stake, both for you and for the public, to make any sudden decision advisable. I may, therefore, be home in time for us to have some conversation before anything comes before the public. Nothing of it shall pass my lips, and I would urge nothing to be done till the latest moment, in the hope that some way of escape may be found. I am of opinion that your retirement would be tantamount to a dissolution of the League ; its mainspring would be gone. I can in no degree take your place. As a second I can fight, but there are incapacities about me, of which I am fully conscious, which prevent my being more than a second in such a work as we have laboured in. Do not think I wish to add to your troubles by writing thus ; but I am most anxious that some delay should take place, and therefore I urge that which I fully believe, that the League's existence depends mostly upon you, and that if the shock cannot be avoided, it should be given only after the weightiest consideration, and in such a way as to produce the least evil. Be assured that in all this disappointment you have my heartfelt sympathy. We have worked long and hard and cordially together ; and I can say most truly that the more I have known you, the more I have had reason to admire and esteem you, and now when a heavy cloud seems upon us, I must not wholly give up the hope that we may yet labour in the good cause until all is gained for which we have striven. You speak of the attempts which have been made to raise the passion which led to the death of Abel, and to weaken us by destroying the confidence which was needful to our successful co-operation. If such attempts have been made, they have wholly failed. To help on the cause, I am sure each of us would in any way have led or followed ; we held our natural and just position, and hence our success. In myself I know nothing that at this moment would rejoice me more, except the absence of these difficulties, than that my retirement from the field could in any way maintain you in the front rank. The victory is now in reality gained, and our

object will before very long be accomplished ; but it is often as difficult to leave a victory as to gain it ; and the sagacity of leaders cannot be dispensed with while anything remains to be done. Be assured I shall think of little else but this distressing turn of affairs till I meet you ; and whilst I am sorry that such should be the position of things, I cannot but applaud the determination you show to look them full in the face, and to grapple with the difficulties while they are yet surmountable. I have written this letter under feelings to which I have not been able to give expression, but you will believe that

I am, with much sympathy and esteem, your sincere friend,

JOHN BRIGHT."

Mr. Bright was unable to remain inactive while his friend was in difficulties, and in two days hastened to Manchester ; and means being found to relieve Mr. Cobden of the pecuniary embarrassment for the time, both friends renewed their labours on behalf of the League ; thus the strong mind of Cobden rose superior to his misfortunes.

For some time before this Mr. Bright had been unremitting in his labours in conducting the inquiry into the Game Laws, before the select committee, but owing to the advanced period of the session, it was recommended by the committee, as they had not been able to bring the inquiry to a close, to re-appoint the committee the following session. Mr. Bright resisted the suppression of the report at that time, and gave notice of a motion in the House of Commons, that the evidence taken be laid on the table, with a view to its being printed. The motion was evaded by those in favour of the Game Laws by counting out the House.

Mr. Bright went to the expense of £300 in publishing a volume containing extracts from the evidence taken before the Select Committee. In its compilation he was assisted by Mr. Richard G. Welford, a lawyer and a good farmer. The introductory address was written by Mr. Bright, in which he argued the hardships of the farmer and agricultural labourer.

"You take a farm on a yearly tenancy or on a lease, with an understanding, or a specific agreement, that the game shall be reserved to the owner ; that is, you grant to the landlord the right to stock the farm, for which you are to pay him rent for permission to cultivate and for the full possession of its produce, with pheasants, partridges, hares, and rabbits to any extent that may suit his caprice. There may be little game when you enter upon the farm, but in general you reserve to yourselves no power to prevent its increase, and it may, and often does, increase so as to destroy the possibility of profit in the cultivation of the farm. You plough and sow, and watch the growing crops with anxiety and hope ; you rise early and eat the bread of carefulness ; rent day comes twice a year, with its inexorable demand ; and yet you are doomed too frequently to see the fertility which Providence bestows and your industry would secure, blighted and destroyed by creatures which would be deemed vermin but for the sanction which the law and your customs give to their preservation, and which exist for no advantage to you and for no good to the public, but solely to afford a few days' amusement in the year to the proprietor of the soil. The seed you sow is eaten by the pheasants ; your young growing grain is bitten down by the hares and rabbits ; and your ripening crops are trampled and injured by a live stock which yields you no return, and which you cannot kill and take to

market. No other class of capitalists are subjected to these disadvantages—no other intelligent and independent class of your countrymen are burdened with such impositions."

In the draft report proposed by Mr. Bright to be the report of the committee, the right hon. gentleman states :—

"To the labourer game offers a perilous resource in times of distress and want of employment; the love of sport also often affords an additional inducement to poaching; and the severity of the law, no less than the universal opinion that there is a great distinction between the right to game and the right to other property, creates a general sentiment of sympathy towards poachers. And although game offences by poor men are punished with severity, the wealthier classes constantly disregard the law; noblemen and gentlemen who desire to get up a stock of game in their preserves have no hesitation in buying live game and game eggs during the breeding season, when by law the taking of them is absolutely prohibited. Game out of season is habitually provided at the clubs and dinners of the rich; the rural labourer is made the instrument by which these indulgences of the wealthy are obtained. Everything concurs to render the Game Laws the source of demoralisation, and to lead the labourers to those first breaches of the law which generally end in serious crime. The destruction of agricultural produce, the prevention of high farming, and the consequent diminution of employment, form a national evil of extensive operation. These circumstances your committee believe to have an important and most mischievous influence on the morals of the people. The farmer whose crops are injured by the game bred on his farm, over which he has no control, disregards infractions of the law, and not unfrequently looks on the poacher as his best friend. His labourers partake of their master's feelings, and deem the taking of game as at least an innocent if not a meritorious act. Unlike other offences, it is in evidence that volunteer prosecutors and witnesses against poachers are almost unknown, and that it is by the testimony of gamekeepers and watchers that convictions take place. Violence and bloodshed constantly occur from the preservation of game, of which numerous cases were referred to by the witnesses examined. Your committee deem it proper, in connection with this subject, to direct the attention of the House to two returns made by order of the House of Commons in 1844. The first consisted in 'A return of all inquests held by the coroners of England and Wales since the year 1833 upon the bodies of gamekeepers, and the verdicts of the juries;' from which it appears that no less than twenty-six verdicts of wilful murder and manslaughter had been found on inquests held upon the bodies of gamekeepers who had met with death by violence. The other was 'A return of the number of persons convicted of any offence against the Game Laws at any petty sessions, quarter sessions, or assizes, during the year 1843, specifying the penalties or punishments inflicted, and in which county, and upon whose property the offences were committed.' From this return it appears that in the year 1843 no less than 4,529 convictions for offences against the Game Laws took place. Your committee consider these returns such important illustrations of the working of the Game Laws that they have caused them to be reprinted in the appendix to their report."

They recommended some slight alteration in the existing laws, but the principal evils complained of were still allowed to exist, and only lately Lord Stradbroke published a letter exposing a condition of affairs in reference to the trade in game eggs, which amounted in fact to an accusation against a number of more or less distinguished owners of preserves of receiving stolen goods.

Mr. Grantley Berkeley was the leader on the Game Law side to disprove the statements of practical agriculturists, who proved how much the farmers' produce was destroyed by hares. During the inquiry he offered himself as a witness, stating how

he had weighed the stomach of newly-killed sheep, newly-killed hares, and other animals; how he found that the food eaten by the hares amounted to not more than a fiftieth part of what was alleged. The birds, he said, such as pheasants, did not only do no harm but great good to the farmers. From pheasants he went to crows, and it remained for Mr. Grantley Berkeley to demonstrate to mankind what was the real value of a crow. It was to Mr. Bright's inquisitiveness that the world owes this valuable addition to its general stock of information. Mr. Berkeley said that crows were exceedingly useful to the farmers in destroying wire-worms; and that where there were no such agents for the abatement of this agricultural nuisance the farmer was obliged to hire boys to do the work for the truant crow. As a rat-catcher is paid by the number of tails he produces, so were these boys paid by the number of worms they destroyed—the tariff being three-halfpence a hundred. Mr. Bright asked Mr. Berkeley how much a boy could make at this rate per day, and he was told ninepence. He was then asked, If a boy made ninepence per day at the rate of three-halfpence per hundred, how many worms did he destroy per day? This was altogether too intricate a problem for Mr. Berkeley's brains; so, finding himself puzzled, he thought the best way of getting out of it was to get into a rage, which he accordingly did, telling Mr. Bright he had not come there to answer arithmetical questions. But this did not satisfy the inquisitor, who, seeing a great discovery about to be made, was determined that through no fault of his should it be lost to the world. He therefore asked Mr. Berkeley if a boy did his work as well as a crow. Mr. Berkeley replied that a crow at such work was worth fifty boys. This was very startling, and Mr. Bright, wishing to know the precise but newly-discovered value of the crow, asked the witness, If a boy was worth ninepence per day, and a crow worth fifty boys, how much was the crow worth to the farmer in sterling money? Paper, pen, and ink were handed to him, and he was assisted in his calculations, when it appeared that a crow was worth to the farmer very nearly £2 per day. At this rate per day, Mr. Berkeley was then asked the yearly value of the bird, which turned out to be £700. He had before said that fifty would be a low average for the number of crows in some districts upon each farm, and the last problem which was put to him was, What was the aggregate value per year to the farmer of his proper quota of these useful birds? This evolved the most startling conclusion of all, for it appeared that the farmer was a gainer of £35,000 from his fifty crows. Happy man! what a

pity he cannot pay his rent in crows. The scene altogether was most amusing, the rage of the discomfited Mr. Grantley Berkeley contrasting well with Mr. Bright's imperturbability.

A personal friend of Mr. Bright, who used to reside in Rochdale many years ago, has related to us an anecdote worthy of repetition. "I remember," said the narrator, "asking Mr. Bright, on his return from one of his lecturing tours with Mr. Cobden, whether, seeing that they met with so much opposition, he really thought they would be successful at last. Mr. Bright replied :—' One day lately I was going along the road, and I saw a man breaking stones ; he was hammering away at a very large stone with a hammer that had a long handle but a very small head. Well, I thought, what a simpleton this man is—why does he not use a sledge hammer and break it at once? However, he kept knocking and knocking for some time, when at last the stone flew in pieces, and I at once saw that if we kept persevering in our attacks the Corn Laws will go just as suddenly.' " With what patience, and industry, and courage, they led the struggle has already been gleaned from these pages, and like other brave men they at length found all things round them coming to their help.

Mr. Bright's illustration is a confirmation of the opinion expressed by Buffon, that "Genius is Patience." Patience must first explore the depths where the pearl lies hid, before Genius boldly dives and brings it up full into light. Nothing great and durable has ever been produced with ease, and labour is the parent of all the lasting wonders of this world, whether in improving the condition of the people, whether in **verse or stone, whether in poetry, prose, or eloquence.**

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE END OF THE CORN-LAWS APPROACHES.

Sir Robert Peel's Conversion to Free Trade—Increased Exertion on the Part of the League—Bright and Cobden again visiting Manchester, Birmingham, Burnley, Sheffield, Preston, Gloucester, Bath, and London—Remarkable Meetings at Goatacre and other places—The Duke of Norfolk's Recipe for Hunger.

WHILE Conservative statesmen were toying with the question of the Corn Laws, which they felt they must sooner or later abolish, the elements themselves had pronounced their doom. The weather during the summer months of 1845 was unfavourable for the growth of corn, as rain fell often, and the beneficent power of the sun seldom reached the grain. When it became known that all over Europe the harvest would be below the average there was consternation, and lamentations were frequently heard in the streets as well as at public meetings. The potato crop in Ireland was also a failure, and famine with its sharp and meagre face of skin and bone threatened the homes of the Irish peasantry. The League at once set vigorously to work, and decided to raise funds amounting to £250,000.

The Cabinet at last saw the serious position of affairs, and as many as five meetings a week were held to consider the distress and the disasters which had fallen upon the country. Sir Robert Peel knew that it was not a time for half measures, and he was favourable to the opening of the ports by an order in council. At the same time he was conscious that ultimately a measure would have to be brought in for the permanent abolition of the protective duties. The opposition to his suggestions in the Cabinet was too strong, and at first the meetings terminated without any result. Parliament was not called together, but again prorogued. On the 22nd of November, 1845, Lord John Russell, in a letter from Edinburgh to his constituents—the electors of the City of London—spoke out on the subject, and this letter produced a great effect upon the Cabinet, and brought many of them round to the views entertained by Sir R. Peel, but the Premier thought the wisest course for him to pursue was to resign, and on the 5th of December he did so. Lord John Russell was accordingly invited by Her Majesty to form a Cabinet, and Sir R. Peel and his friends promised to give their

support to any reasonable measure, but Lord John Russell was not able to persuade Lord Grey to enter the administration with Lord Palmerston as foreign minister, and, as there were other obstacles, Lord J. Russell on the 29th of December announced to Her Majesty that he was not able to form a Cabinet. Sir R. Peel was again invited to resume office, and he consented, although he was fully aware that about 200 members of his own party would vote against him on the question of abolishing the protective duties, and that he could only rely upon 90 Conservatives, and 180 Whigs and Radicals. Before he brought the measure matured into Parliament, Lord Stanley retired from the office of secretary of the colonies, and Mr. Gladstone filled the vacancy.

On the 28th of November an aggregate meeting of the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League resident in Manchester and neighbourhood was held in the Free Trade Hall, and on no former occasion was so much anxiety displayed to hear the course to be adopted under the unusual circumstances in which food and employment were placed. Eight thousand persons crowded the hall, and multitudes remained outside unable to gain admission. On the platform were the representatives of an amount of wealth and capital such as had never before been collected in one assembly in the north of England. Mr. George Wilson presided. Mr. R. Cobden was the first speaker; Mr. Henry Ashworth, of Turton, near Bolton, followed, and Mr. John Bright next addressed the gathering, and in his speech he said :—

“ I have often tried to picture to myself what famine is, but the human mind is not capable of drawing any form, any scene, that will realise the horrors which are included in that term. The men who made the Corn Law are totally ignorant of what it means. The agricultural labourers know something of it in some counties—the worst-farmed counties in the kingdom—and there are some hand-loom weavers in Lancashire who know what it is. I saw the other night, late at night, a light in a cottage window, and heard the loom busy at work, the shuttle flying rapidly. It ought to have a cheerful sound, and naturally it has a cheerful sound, but when it is at work near midnight, when there is care upon the brow of the workman lest he should not be able to secure that which will maintain his wife and his children, then there is a foretaste of that which is meant by the word ‘famine.’ (Hear, hear.) Oh, if these men who made the Corn Law, if these men who step in between the Creator and His creatures, could for only one short twelvemonth—I would inflict upon them no harder punishment for all their guilt—if they for one single twelvemonth might sit at the loom and throw the shuttle (cheers). I will not ask that they should have the rest of the evils; I will not ask that they should be torn by the harrowing feelings which must exist when a beloved wife and helpless children are suffering the horrors which this Corn Law has inflicted upon millions. (Renewed cheering). . . . From all I have been able to see and read of him (Sir R. Peel) I have come to the conclusion that, whatever his faults may be as a statesman, he does hope that future times shall speak of him as a man who did some good to the country over which he was called to rule. He has stated that he does look to the time when his name is to be read amongst those who are not wholly to be despised by posterity. Then is there in the whole range of politics, of legislative acting, any single question upon which he could base so great a name as on this? Is there any

principle so worthy of the highest statesmanship and the purest patriotism? I have some hope that Sir Robert Peel will see this; that he will not fall into the trap which his political adversaries have set for him; that he will not support that principle of a fixed duty which he has constantly for the last two years said was altogether unsound and untenable; but that as his policy has been signalised by relaxations in the commercial code, he will now complete the work he has begun, by carrying out fully upon the statute book a principle so essential to his country's safety. (Cheers.) . . . Not a week ago this hall was filled by a meeting almost as large as this—a meeting which I cannot but think had an object kindred to our own. (Hear, hear.) We would feed the body; we would give every man the means of cultivating that which is of more value than the body. On that occasion the distinguished chairman, in a speech which I heard with more delight than I can possibly express, alluded to that unfortunate poet, Chatterton, whom he spoke of as 'the wondrous boy of Bristol.' That 'wondrous boy' when not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age wrote a poem which he styled 'A Prophecy,' and not inaptly styled it, for the true poet is always a prophet. (Hear, hear.) He said:—

'Commerce o'er Bondage shall prevail,
Free as the winds that fill her sail;
When she complains of vile restraint,
And power is deaf to her complaint;
Look up, ye Britons, cease to sigh,
For your redemption draweth nigh.'

(Great cheering.) He some eighty years ago foresaw a day when, through the spread of manufactures and commerce, there would be a new people created in this kingdom, and with a new people a new mind, and with a new mind a new power—a power which should cope with the elements of despotism, which he saw then gathering and strengthening themselves for the enslavement of his country. (Hear, hear.) Now, it comes to us to be fulfilled that which he foretold." (Cheers.)

A banquet was given in honour of the Hon. C. P. Villiers, the representative of Wolverhampton, in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 13th of November. Upwards of 600 gentlemen were present, and hundreds were not able to get admittance. The scene of so many eminent men, and the enthusiasm that prevailed, was heart-stirring. Mr. Henry Smith, the mayor, presided, and in the course of his speech said:—

"Why had they assembled on that occasion to do honour to Mr. Villiers? It was because they had seen in the conduct of that gentleman since the commencement of his political life everything to admire; that they had witnessed his untiring advocacy of those principles in which they most concurred; and because they all admired the zeal and ability with which he had advocated the principles of commercial freedom." (Cheers.)

Mr. Villiers, Earl Ducie, Mr. R. Cobden, and Mr. J. Bright addressed the gathering in lengthy speeches.

Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, at the large manufacturing town of Burnley, at a meeting in the Court House on the 17th of November, addressed 2,000 of the inhabitants. Nearly every mill in the town ceased working an hour earlier for the convenience of the workpeople attending the meeting. The speeches were received with great enthusiasm.

They were next in the Cutlers' Hall, Sheffield, on the 24th of November, and a large audience listened to them.

"Six weeks ago," said Mr. Bright on this occasion, "there was, generally speaking, a fair trade throughout the cotton districts, and in some parts the trade was exceedingly brisk, and more than ordinarily profitable. The demand was then constant, and suffered little or no check whatever, until after a long period of rainy and unfavourable weather the harvest was found to be deficient, and prices gradually rose; and, in addition to this, an alarming rumour was spread abroad of the almost total failure of the potato crop. Now, there is no other cause whatever to which the present depression of trade in the cotton districts can be attributed, except to this." (Hear, hear.)

The day following, the 25th of November, Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden went to Leeds, and were received with "vehement cheering" as they entered the Music Hall, in which the meeting was held. Mr. J. D. Luccock, the mayor, presided.

In two days they were again at Preston, and held a meeting in the Corn Exchange. Hundreds of persons were unable to be present in consequence of the comparative smallness of the room, but accommodation was found for 900 persons. Mr. Satterthwaite was in the chair.

"On the previous night," said Mr. Bright, "I made inquiry at Blackburn, and was told by one person that whereas six months ago he got eight pounds of bread for one shilling he now gets only five pounds and a quarter, and the quality is not so good, for the wheat this harvest is of an inferior quality, and the Corn Law prevents good qualities from coming in to be mixed with it. This is just the same as if, when a working-man comes in to breakfast, dinner, or tea, and proceeds to cut some slices of bread for his family, he should find that out of three loaves somebody had walked off with one, or more than that, nearly one and a half. (Laughter.) This is not a figure of speech, it is a matter of fact. The same person told me that 240 pounds of meal, worth 28s. 6d. or 29s. six months ago, are worth 42s. 6d. now. I don't know whether it would be of use making any argument after such a statement. . . . During my eighteen years' connection with the cotton trade of Lancashire I have never known a reverse so sudden, and sad, and universal, as has taken place within the last six weeks. I believe there never was anything like it before—certainly nothing like it since the peace. There is no cause for this, I believe, but that which we have assigned, viz., a partial failure of the harvest and a very serious and almost universal failure of the potato crop."

The two eminent members of the League were in the Shire Hall, Gloucester, on the evening of the 1st December, addressing 2,000 of the inhabitants. Mr. J. W. Hughes, the mayor, was in the chair. From Gloucester they went to Stroud, and on the 3rd of December they spoke to 1,600 persons, who had assembled to hear them in the large Subscription Room of the town. The following evening they addressed a meeting in the Corn Exchange, Wakefield, and the whole of the proceedings passed off with spirit and unanimity.

On the afternoon of the 4th of December Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden were received enthusiastically by 2,000 persons assembled in the Banqueting Hall of the opulent city of Bath. Mr. Samuel Bachelor, the mayor, occupied the chair. Mr. Cobden addressed the gathering, and Mr. Bright followed in a lengthy speech, during which he said he loved the question

of Free-trade, not only because Free-trade would feed our countrymen, and clothe the Americans and other people, but because it had some great features which distinguished it from almost all previous popular movements. It was essentially a forerunner of peace throughout the world.

Mr. Bright and his friend Mr. Cobden travelled to Bristol, a city which has been much favoured by royalty, and the birthplace of Robert Southey, "the marvellous boy" Chatterton, "the sleepless soul that perished in his pride," and Hannah More. A meeting was held in a large public room in Broadmead. 1,100 of the inhabitants were present, and hundreds of others were unable to gain admittance on account of the crowded state of the room. A sovereign premium was offered for the tickets, so anxious were the residents to see and hear the great Free-trade apostles. Earl Ducie presided. Next morning they went on to Wootton-Under-Edge, and 2,000 persons assembled in the National School-room to listen to their speeches.

They were back again in Manchester on the 10th of December at a meeting in the Free-trade Hall. The greatest excitement had prevailed for several days previously on the part of the public to get tickets of admission, and many persons came a distance of thirty miles to be present. The hall was crowded, hundreds of persons not being able to gain admittance. Mr. George Wilson was the chairman, and in opening the meeting he said :—

"From one end of the kingdom to the other the cry has been ringing in the ears of her Majesty's ministers, 'Open the ports, and let the corn in free!' (Cheers.) Coincident with these meetings, our friends, Messrs. Cobden and Bright, have been conducting the attacks of the League upon the counties. (Cheers.) I have in my pocket a list of the meetings these patriotic gentlemen have attended since we last assembled together in this Hall, and I will read it—Halifax, Huddersfield, Birmingham, Blackburn, Burnley, Leeds, Sheffield, Preston, Wakefield, Gloucester, Stroud, Bristol, Bath, Nottingham, Derby, and Wootton-under-Edge—in all, sixteen meetings." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. T. M. Gibson was the next to address the meeting, and he stated :—

"Unquestionably no public movement has ever made such rapid advances as the movement for the repeal of the Corn Laws, and none has been led with greater intelligence than this movement by our excellent friends, Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. W. J. Fox next remarked :—

"Julius Cæsar is said to have been so pleased with the statue of Alexander the Great, by Aristippos, that he ordered the head to be taken off, and his own countenance to be put on its shoulders. (Laughter.) And I myself once lived in a cathedral town where there was a statue of St. Paul over the great western entrance of the church. The men at work on the repairs knocked St. Paul's head off; the dean and chapter, being too stingy to employ a sculptor, went to some old stonemason's shop in the

town, where they found a judge's head, with a wig on, and there St. Paul stands to this day with a judge's wig and curls on his head! (Loud laughter.) Now, as preposterous a transformation as this would it be, when in a coming time—I hope in the new Houses of Parliament—the statues shall be erected to the founders of Free-trade, if on those statues should be placed the heads of Russell, Peel, and Wellington, instead of those of Cobden, Bright, and Villiers. (Cheers.) Great as may be the political advantage, the advantage in Parliamentary tactics of these eminent names, that is all we can plead for them. The work has been done—the chariot of Free-trade has been driven within sight of the goal; and Russell, Peel and Wellington, at best, are only yoked to it to drag it along the few remaining paces to its final destination. (Cheers.) It is an honour for them to do that, and I hope they will put their shoulders to the yoke kindly, and let it not be a moment longer in the country than is absolutely necessary. (Cheers.) . . . 'Powder-day!' No; our cause is not like a cannon—it is more like a steam-engine. (Cheers.) It is preparing for its journey; the hour of starting is come; the bell rings, and it rings the death-knell of monopoly. (Cheers.) There is a steady hand (pointing to the chairman) to steer the engine. (Cheers.) There are active stokers to keep up the bright fire (pointing to Messrs. Cobden and Bright). (Cheers.) On it then moves. Out of the way, calves and pigs!—(laughter)—out of the way, or you're veal and pork in no time! (Laughter.) Booted squires and sportsmen, clear the line, or down you go, horse and rider, in spite of all your game laws! (Cheers and laughter.) Such a train as that would dash through a house if it stood in the way, though it should be a house as old, and as strong for its age, as the House of Lords itself. (Cheers.) On it goes, brightened in the sun, careless of the storm, all good spirits in heaven and earth in sympathy with its progress; nor shall it rest until it reaches its final destination, until we are home, in the people's home,—a home made happy by freedom, peace, plenty, and progress." (Cheers.)

A large number of persons here called for "Cobden," and at length the distinguished member for Stockport came forward and addressed the meeting:—

"Within the last nine days my honourable friend, Mr. Bright, and I have addressed seven meetings. We have been in the cathedral city of Bath, and the mountains of Derbyshire. We have been in Gloucestershire. Wherever we have gone there is the same unanimous feeling that we find amongst our tall chimneys in Lancashire. (Cheers.) Everywhere the only complaint is, there is no place large enough to receive the Free-traders." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright, who had attended this meeting only as a spectator, was also loudly called for, and consenting was loudly cheered.

"You are recommended by the Duke of Norfolk," he said, "to feed upon warm water and curry powder; and as if this was not absurd enough, you are recommended by Dr. Buckland to try mangel-wurzel." (Laughter.)

The frequent absence from home of Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden was of course a loss to their families, but the "children of the League," as theirs were sometimes called, used to be told that their fathers were working hard in order to get cheap and plentiful bread for the little children of the poor. So much was Mr. Cobden necessarily absent from his family that when he was amongst them, his eldest child, Richard, used to ask, when he was going *home*; thinking his home must be where he spent most time.

On the 19th of December a meeting was held in Covent

Garden Theatre, and from floor to roof it was a living human pile of both sexes. As soon as Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden appeared on the stage the entire audience cheered lustily. The Right Hon. C. P. Villiers was the chairman. Mr. R. Cobden first addressed the meeting. Mr. Bright was the next; and he said:—

“Within the last fifty years trade has done much for the people of England. Our population has greatly increased. Our villages have become towns, and our small towns large cities. The contemned class of manufacturers and traders have assumed another and very different position, and the great proprietors of the soil now find that there are other men and interests to be consulted in this kingdom besides those of whom they have taken such great care through the legislation which they have managed. In the varying fortunes of this contest we have previously seen one somewhat feeble and attenuated administration overthrown, and now we see another, which every man thought powerful and robust, prostrate in the dust. (Cheers.) . . . Since the time when we first came to London to ask the attention of Parliament to the question of the Corn Laws, two millions of human beings have been added to the population of the United Kingdom. (Hear, hear.) The table is here as before; the food is spread in about the same quantity as before; but two millions of fresh guests have arrived, and the circumstance makes the question a serious one, both for the Government and for us. Those two millions are so many arguments for the Anti-Corn-Law League—so many emphatic condemnations of the policy of this iniquitous law. Why, I see them now in my mind’s eye ranged before me, old men and young children, all looking to the Government for bread; some endeavouring to resist the stroke of famine, clamorous and turbulent, but still arguing with us; others dying mute and uncomplaining. Multitudes have died of hunger in the United Kingdom since we first asked the Government to repeal the Corn Law; and although the great and the powerful may not regard those who suffer mutely and die in silence, yet the recording angel will note down their patient endurance and the heavy guilt of those by whom they have been sacrificed. (Cheers.) . . . We have had landlord rule longer, far longer, than the life of the oldest man in this vast assembly, and I would ask you to look at the results of that rule, and then decide whether it be not necessary to interpose some check on the extravagance of such legislation. They have unlimited sway in Parliament and in the provinces. Abroad the history of our country is the history of war and rapine: at home, of debt, taxes, and rapine too. (Hear, hear.) In all the great contests in which we have been engaged we have found that this ruling class have taken all the honours, while the people have taken all the scars. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) No sooner was the country freed from the horrible contest which was so long carried on with the powers of Europe, than this law, by their partial legislation, was enacted—far more hostile to British interests than any combination of foreign powers has ever proved. (Cheers.) We find them legislating corruptly; going to the table of each House of Parliament, and making oath that in their legislation they would altogether discard all private ends and partial affections, and the very same day, it may be, sitting down to make a law for the purpose of extorting from all the consumers of food a higher price than it is worth, that that extra price may be placed in the pockets of the proprietors of land, they themselves being the very men by whom this infamous law was made. (Cheers.) . . . The bad cultivation of the land provides scarcely any employment for the labourers, who become more and more numerous in the parish; the competition which there is amongst these labourers for the little employment to be had bringing down the wages to the very lowest point at which their lives can be kept in them. They are heart-broken, spirit-broken, despairing men. They have been accustomed to this from their youth, and there is nothing in the future which affords a single ray of hope. We have attended meetings in those districts (Wiltshire), and have been received with the utmost enthusiasm by these round-frocked labourers. They would have carried us from the carriage which we had travelled in to the hustings; and if a silly squire or a foolish farmer attempted any disturbance or improper interference, the round-frocked men were all round us in an instant, ready to defend us; and I have seen them hustle many a powerful man from the field in which the meeting was being held. (Cheers.) If there be one view of this question which

more stimulates me to hard work in this cause than another, it is the fearful sufferings which I know to exist amongst the rural labourers in almost every part of this kingdom. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) How can they be men under the circumstances in which they live? During the period of their growing up to manhood they are employed at odd jobs about the farm or farm-yard, for wages which are merely those of little children in Lancashire. Every man who marries is considered an enemy to the parish; every child who is born into the world, instead of being a subject of rejoicing to its parents and to the community, is considered as an intruder come to compete for the little work and the small quantity of food which is left to the population. (Cheers.) And then comes toil, year after year, long years of labour, with little remuneration; but perhaps at sixty or seventy a gift of 20s. and a coat, or of £2 from the Agricultural Society, because they have brought up a large family, and have not committed that worst of all sins, taking money from the parochial rates. (Hear, hear.) One of their own poets has well expressed their condition:—

‘A blessed prospect—
To slave while there is strength—in age the workhouse,
A parish shell at last, and the little bell
Toll’d hastily for a pauper’s funeral.’

. . . Now centuries ago the people of this country were engaged in a fearful conflict with the crown. A despotic and treacherous monarch assumed to himself the right to levy taxes without the consent of Parliament and the people. That assumption was resisted. This fair land became a battle-field, the kingdom was convulsed, and an ancient throne overturned. Well, if our forefathers 200 years ago resisted the attempt—if they refused to be the bondsmen of a king, shall we be the born thralls of an aristocracy like ours? (Loud cheers, and shouts of ‘No, no, no.’) Shall we who struck the lion down, shall we pay the *wolf* homage? or shall we not, by a manly and united expression of public opinion, at once, and for ever, put an end to this giant wrong? (Loud cheers.)

Mr. W. J. Fox was the next speaker:—

“When experience has taught the most backward of them to acknowledge that at last you have rightly guided them in the course of peace, prosperity, and of social advancement; oh, then, it will be the disposition of mankind at large to render honour to the record of the historians to whom honour is due, and in that sort of pyramid which the world will pile in commemoration of this grand event, of this peaceful, just, and fraternal policy, there may be the names of political and parliamentary leaders at the base, but above them will be the names of philosophers, our Adam Smith, and other enlightened men, whose works made the subject understood, and prepared the way for those blessed changes; and above them will be the practical men, your Bright and Cobden, and their fellow-labourers—(cheers)—the real abolishers of the Corn Law, so far as individuals are able—above them, and above all, will be the inscription of the world’s gratitude to the people of England, for that they enforced the adoption of a Free Trade policy.” (Vehement cheering.)

A meeting of merchants, bankers, manufacturers, traders and others was held at the Manchester Town Hall, on the 23rd of December, to consider the best means of aiding the operations of the National Anti-Corn-Law League. Mr. Robert Hyde Greg was the chairman. Upwards of £60,000 were subscribed in the course of a few hours. Twenty-three firms gave £1,000 each, and amongst the number was the firm “Messrs. John Bright and Brothers.”

On the night of the 5th of January, 1846, a remarkable meeting was held at Goatacre, a village six miles from the town of Wootton-Basset, Wiltshire. The population of Goatacre at that time scarcely exceeded 200, and consisted nearly altogether

of agricultural labourers. Similar villages or hamlets surrounded it at various distances. The inhabitants of this district had suffered severely by the action of the Corn Laws, and some time previously they formed a "Reform Society," and decided to hold a meeting in a tent, on the night of the 5th of January, for the purpose of petitioning the Queen for the total abolition of the Corn-Law. However, to provide a tent for the accommodation of the inhabitants was beyond the combined contributions of these poor people, therefore they were compelled to assemble together in the cross road of the village, and to endure the inclemency of the winter night while they talked over their common sufferings. A hurdle supported by four stakes, driven into the ground beneath a hedge on the road-side, formed a narrow and unsteady platform, capable of supporting only the chairman and one speaker at a time. Below this rustic erection were placed a small deal table and some rush-seated chairs, borrowed from a neighbouring cottage, for the accommodation of the reporters. Four or five candles, some in lanterns and others sheltered from the wind by the hands that held them, threw a dim and flickering light upon the groups on this spot, around which were gathered nearly one thousand of the peasantry of Wiltshire, some of them accompanied by their wives and children, who, thus collected, presented a wild and painful appearance. In the shadows of the night the distinctive garb of their class was everywhere discernible, but when the flitting clouds permitted the moon to shine brightly on their faces, in them might be seen written, in strong and unmistakeable lines, anxiety, supplication, want, hunger, ever responsive in expression to the sentiments and statements delivered by the speakers, who merely described in plain, unvarnished language the miseries of their rural auditors.

David Kell, a man of rather advanced age, was finally called upon to preside, and he stated that he had only six shillings a week for his labour to keep himself, his wife, and two small children. £6 10s. a year he paid for his house and garden. He asked what was it they were sent into the world for? Was it not for the benefit of society? Had God not committed to them a talent, and would He not require the use of it at their hands? He had looked upon His people in Egypt, had seen their afflictions, and had raised up Moses to be their deliverer. Again, He raised up Gideon to deliver them out of the hands of the Midianites; and Cyrus to deliver them from Babylon, when His people were in captivity; and to come

nearer to their own time, He raised up Oliver Cromwell and many others to do what was to be done. And to-day, had they not a Cobden, a Bright, and a Radnor.

William Burchell next climbed on to the hurdle to address the gathering, but finding a difficulty at first in speaking, one of his fellow-labourers called out:—"Never mind about a word or two; hungry men can understand what you mean." The remark was re-echoed by many voices. He said that those who were in distress should come forward and manfully make their distress known: they would thus show the necessity for Free Trade, which he believed to be the only remedy. He heard that in centuries past labouring men had for food, bread, butter, cheese, beef, pork and beer; now they had bad potatoes and salt. He was often thankful that the streams and rivulets were so bountifully spread around their neighbourhood, and that taxation could not be written on their bosoms. He was past forty years of age, and he could say that he never purchased a pound of good slaughtered beef fit to be carried into the market. As to mutton he had purchased a little of that, but never as much as would average a pound a year in the forty years. He knew what veal was, but he had never had any at all. Several other labourers gave similar testimony, and the proposal to petition Her Majesty was carried unanimously.

On the 6th of January a meeting was held in the Corn Market, St. Nicholas Square, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and 6,000 persons assembled there to welcome Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, and to listen to their speeches. The "merrie bells" of St. Nicholas rang out joyfully in commemoration of the event. Special trains were run from the neighbouring towns of North and South Shields, Sunderland, and Durham, for the convenience of persons attending the meeting. Sir John Fife was in the chair.

The Liverpool Amphitheatre from the ground floor to the very roof was crowded on the 9th of January, and appeared instinct with life and animation. Mr. W. Brown was in the chair. Mr. William Rathbone, Mr. Lawrence Heyworth, Mr. R. Cobden, Colonel Thompson, and John Bright addressed the meeting.

"At this moment I cannot help looking back," said Mr. Bright, "to the period when I first formed one of a deputation from the Anti-Corn-Law League to visit the town and port of Liverpool, to invite its large and enterprising and intelligent population to assist us in the great contest upon which we were then entering. I recollect that although there was then a large audience to greet us, yet it was felt by everybody that in your town, amongst many very influential persons, there was an extreme apathy to the object we had in view. We have proved, however, that here, as elsewhere, by persevering labour, by honest devotion to the great question, and on good principle, we have gradually stimulated our friends to renewed and increased

exertions, and have diminished to a very large extent the opposition with which we were met by those who did not coincide with us. At present we have, I believe, almost the whole kingdom in favour of the principles which we have expounded." (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

The amount subscribed to the League Fund at this meeting was £13,000.

A banquet was held in the Music Hall, Leeds, on the 14th of January, and about 400 of the inhabitants were present. Mr. John Druton Ancock, the mayor, presided. Mr. W. Aldam, M.P., Mr. E. Baines, jun., Colonel Thompson, and Mr. Cobden addressed the meeting. "We have had hard labours, true enough," said Mr. Bright in his speech, "but we have been cheered by your approbation, and not less by the glorious prospect which is ever increasing." On the following evening both Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright were in the Athenæum, Carlisle, speaking to a large gathering, which had assembled under the presidency of the Mayor, Mr. J. Steel.

A meeting was held in the Free-trade Hall, on the 16th of January, and so eager were the people to gain admission that a large portion of the seats were removed from the platform and the body of the hall to make more room, and yet 5,000 persons, it was reckoned, had to be shut out. As soon as Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Fox, and Mr. George Wilson appeared on the platform, handkerchiefs and hats were waved, and the huzzas were lusty and grand. Mr. G. Wilson was, as usual, in the chair, and Mr. Cobden said:—

"I believe that the physical gain will be the smallest gain to humanity from the success of this principle. I look further; I see in the Free Trade principle that which shall act on the moral world as the principle of gravitation in the universe—drawing men together, thrusting aside the antagonism of race, and creed, and language, and uniting us in the bonds of eternal peace. (Cheers.) I have looked even further. I have speculated and probably dreamt, in the dim future—ay, a thousand years hence—I have speculated on what the effect of the triumph of this principle may be. I believe that the effect will be to change the face of the world, so as to introduce a system of government entirely distinct from that which now prevails. I believe that the desire and the motives for large and mighty empires—for gigantic armies and great navies—for those materials which are used for the destruction of life and the desolation of the rewards of labour—will die away; I believe that such things will cease to be necessary or to be used, when man becomes one family, and freely exchanges the fruits of his labour with his brother-man." (Cheers.)

"I do not pretend to understand exactly what our constitution is made of," next remarked Mr. Bright during the course of his lengthy speech; "whether it stands upon a point or a pivot so nicely balanced that it may be easily overturned; but I have no idea that it is of a construction so fragile that it will be overturned because we have plenty to eat. (Laughter and cheers.) . . . Have not you found that whenever they (the Protectionists) have been the nursing-fathers of trade it has not answered: the child of Protection has always been a starved child and decrepit, and has never attained to maturity and manhood. (Cheers.) . . . We ask for what is very simple. We say, Surely as much food as a man can buy, with as much wages as a man can get, for as much work as a man can do, is not more than the natural, inalienable birthright of every man whom God has created with strength to labour and with hands to work. Now that is the question; that is the

petition; that is the simple demand which now arises from this great meeting, and made by the millions who are represented here." (Cheers.)

The Duke of Norfolk, who did not dispute the existence of the distress, had the effrontery to recommend the destitute to take a pinch of curry powder in water, to allay their cravings for food. The noble Duke might have further pointed out that it was amazing how little people could live upon if they tried, and quoted, for example, that Franklin and his fellow-travellers on the North Pole Expedition fared on a pair of leather breeches for many days, but, of course, not for the poor people to imitate the experiment; for leather breeches would be too expensive a diet, and if taught to indulge in it, they might have a hankering for the dukes' and the squires' nether garments.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OVERTHROW OF THE CORN LAWS.

Opening of Parliament, and the Discussions respecting the Corn Laws and the Distress—Sir R. Peel's Recommendation—Mr. Bright speaking on behalf of his absent Friend—The Breaking-up of Political Ties—Mr. Disraeli's Attacks on Sir Robert Peel—The Corn Laws Abolished by the House of Lords.

THE session of Parliament of 1846 opened on the 22nd of January, and it was one of the most remarkable in the history of Free Trade. Her Majesty, in her speech, which was delivered in person, shadowed forth the abolition of the Corn Laws. The House of Commons was crowded, and when Sir Robert Peel rose the full gaze and attention of all were directed to him. Early in his speech he admitted that on the question of the Corn Laws his opinions had undergone a complete change. This announcement was received with triumphant cheering from the opposition benches, but the ministerial was silent. The Prime Minister then proceeded to show that all the grounds on which "Protection to native industry" was advocated, had been proved to be wholly untenable, and he thus concluded his speech:—

"I am ready to incur its responsibilities, to bear its sacrifices, to confront its honourable perils; but I will not retain it with mutilated power and shackled authority. (Cheers.) I will not stand at the helm during the tempestuous night, if the helm is not allowed freely to traverse. I will not undertake to direct the course of the vessel by observations taken in the year 1842. (Loud cheers.) I will reserve to myself the unfettered power of judging what will be for the public interest. I do not desire to be the minister of England; but while I am minister of England I will hold office by no servile tenure (loud cheers). I will hold office unshackled by any other obligation than that of consulting the public interests, and providing for the public safety." (Great cheering.)

On the 27th of January the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons was crowded, and the passages and the streets to the House were hardly passable. There were not less than 400 members of Parliament in their seats, and the seats below the bar were filled with peers and other distinguished visitors. Prince Albert, the Duke of Cambridge, and the Earl of Jersey were present. Sir Robert Peel, in the midst of great interest, unfolded the ministerial plan of Free Trade. Its chief characteristic was the elaborate attempt at equalisation. It embraced every class, and touched every article. The debate was adjourned to the 9th of February, and was continued on the 10th, 11th,

12th, 13th, and 16th. On the latter date Sir Robert Peel rose about a quarter to ten o'clock, and spoke till one o'clock, delivering a most powerful and earnest speech with remarkable grace, which seemed to entrance his auditors.

"These sad times may recur," said Sir R. Peel. "The years of plenteousness may have ended and the years of dearth may have come; and again you may have to offer the unavailing expressions of sympathy, and the urgent exhortations to patient resignation. Commune with your own hearts and answer me this question: Will your assurances of sympathy be less consolatory, will your exhortations to patience be less impressive, if, with your willing consent, the Corn Law shall have then ceased to exist? Will it be no satisfaction to you to reflect that by your own act you have been relieved of the grievous responsibility of regulating the supply of food? (Cheers.) Will you not then cherish with delight the reflection that, in this the present hour of comparative prosperity, yielding to no clamour, impelled by no fear—except, indeed, that provident fear which is the mother of safety—you had anticipated the evil day, and long before its advent had trampled on every impediment to the free circulation of the Creator's bounty? (Cheers.) When you are again exhorting a suffering people to fortitude under their privations, when you are telling them, 'These are the chastenings of an allwise and merciful Providence, sent for some inscrutable but just and beneficent purpose—it may be, to humble our pride, or to punish our unfaithfulness, or to impress us with the sense of our own nothingness and dependence on His mercy;' when you are thus addressing your fellow-subjects, and encouraging them to bear without repining the dispensations of Providence, may God grant that by your decision of this night you may have laid in store for yourselves the consolation of reflecting that such calamities are, in truth, the dispensation of Providence—that they have not been caused, they have not been aggravated by laws of man restricting, in the hour of scarcity, the supply of food." (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

The following evening, the 17th of February, the debate was resumed, and its great feature was that the most prominent members of the League broke silence, and descended among the rhetorical gladiators of the Commons. At this time Mr. Cobden was seriously ill through over-exhaustion and a severe cold, which brought on nervous pains in the side of the head and terminated in an abscess. Mr. John Bright was therefore selected by the Free-traders to express their intentions. In one journal the scene was thus described:—"The singularity of his position as he rose to address the (miscalled) Oppositionists and Ministerialists, seemed to animate him to an unwonted pitch of rhetorical excellence; his periods were, as usual, adroitly and elegantly turned; but, in addition to this, they alternately glittered with satire and burnt with energy, and thrilled with a tone even occasionally pathetic. Nor was there anything forced or conventional in his speech; he became effective without apparent labour, and never appeared to strive for the attention of his auditors. And, indeed, this very aspect of being spontaneous and unaffected lent to each opinion its principal interest. There is something absolutely noble, there is something admirable, there is something great in the pure and generous eloquence with which the hon. member eulogised his

former antagonist, the courageous, the large-spirited, and now popular Sir Robert Peel."

Mr. Bright's speech was four columns and a-half in length. Referring to the Protectionists, he said:—

"All the newspapers which have the widest circulation are almost without exception in favour of the Government proposal. The public laugh at your predictions, and you yourselves disbelieve them. We have heard of men going merrily to battle; there is the chance of escape, and the hope of such renown as successful battle gives; we have even heard of some reckless and daring criminals who have joked upon the scaffold; but never have we seen men sliding into the unfathomable abyss of ruin with faces so jovial and complacent as those of the honourable Protectionists opposite. (Loud laughter from both sides.) You say the right hon. baronet is a traitor. It would ill become me to attempt his defence after the speech he delivered last night—(loud cheers from the Opposition)—a speech I will venture to say more powerful and more to be admired than any speech which has been delivered in this House within the memory of any member of it. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I watched the right hon. baronet as he went home last night, and for the first time I envied his feelings. (Cheers.) That speech has been circulated by scores of thousands throughout this kingdom and is speeding to every part of the world, and wherever there is a man who loves justice, and wherever there is a suffering creature whom you have trampled under foot, that speech will give joy to the heart of the one and hope to the heart of the other. (Loud cheers. At these words Sir R. Peel was moved, and the tears rose to his eyes.) You chose the right hon. baronet—why? because he was the ablest man of the party. You always said so, and you will not deny it now. Why was he the ablest? Because he had great experience, profound attainments, and, as you have always said, an honest regard for the good of the country. You placed him in office. When a man is in office he is not the same man that he is when in opposition. (Laughter.) The present generation, or posterity, does not deal as mildly with men in government as with those in opposition. There are such things as responsibilities of office. (Cheers.) Look at the population of Lancashire and Yorkshire, and ask yourselves whether, with all your valour, although you talk of raising the standard of Protection, and cry 'Down with the Anti-Corn-Law League,' there are not men in your ranks—and I defy them—who will take the bench (the Treasury) pledged to a maintenance of this law? (Cheers.) The right hon. baronet took the only honourable course. He resigned. He told you by that act, 'I can't any longer do what you want—I can't defend your cause.' The right hon. baronet, no longer your minister, came back the minister of the Sovereign and of the people, and not the advocate of a class who placed him at their head for their own special and private objects."

The cheers and expressions of approval which resounded through the House indicated that what had been uttered was just the opinion of the majority present.

The debate was continued on the 19th, and on the evening of the 20th February, when Mr. Disraeli spoke on the subject and everybody expected a treat, the hon. gentleman on this occasion dropped his style of invective, and made a plain speech.

The debate was again adjourned to the 23rd of February, and continued on the 24th, 26th and 27th. Mr. Cobden, on the latter date, addressed the House, and when he rose, all round him, both Ministers, Free-traders, and Protectionists set up a hearty cheer, as if to mark their gratification that his recent illness had not prevented him from showing himself at the close of the scene of the Corn Law discussion. This grateful tribute over, dead silence ensued, amid which Mr. Cobden began in a low

voice. As he went on, however, he gathered strength and warmed to his subject. He stated that he had carefully read over every word of the debate, and it appeared to him that all that had been said might be conveniently distributed under two heads. The first was merely the invective of an angry party against the chief whom they had lost; the second treated mainly of the propriety of appealing to the country before legislating on this measure, and slightly on the merits of the case.

The division took place the same evening, when the Government gained a majority of 97. The House then resolved itself *pro forma* into committee. The examination of the voting showed that the strength of the Protectionists consisted mainly in pocket boroughs and nomination counties, and that in all large constituencies the repealers of the Corn Laws were found to predominate.

On the 2nd of March the House went again into committee, when Mr. Bright spoke in favour of immediate abolition. The House sat again on the 3rd and 6th of March, and on the last date the amendments which had been proposed and which threatened fixed duties and fixed miniature sliding scales were overthrown. The debate was continued on the 9th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 17th, 20th, 23rd, 24th, 26th and 27th of March. The Protectionists, chiefly led by Mr. Disraeli, Lord Worcester, Lord George Bentinck, and Mr. Borthwick, attempted again to delay the progress or mutilate the efficiency of the bill, but they were unsuccessful, and the second reading was carried by a majority of 88 on the 27th of March. Sir Robert Peel on this occasion nobly observed :—

“ I shall carry with me the satisfaction of reflecting that, during the course of my official career, my object has been to mitigate monopoly, to increase the demand for industry, to remove the restrictions upon commerce, to equalise the burden of taxation, and to ameliorate the condition of those who toil.”

Lord Palmerston closed the debate in a skilful speech. Formerly he used to refer to Mr. Cobden as “ the hon. member for Stockport,” and to Mr. Bright as “ the hon. member for Durham ;” but he now said that the change of opinion and policy on the subject of the Corn Law, which the Government had so practically exhibited, was to be traced, not so much to the experience of the last three years as to the effect of the debates of the last four sessions, and, turning round to Mr. Cobden, who sat behind him, “ to the exertions of my hon. friend, the member for Stockport.”

The delay in the progress of the measure embarrassed trade, as all commercial transactions had for a long period been suspended.

The staple manufacture of Lancashire and Yorkshire was almost paralysed, and both masters and men were driven nearly to the verge of ruin. The delay also deranged the state of the Corn Trade.

On the 4th of May the debate was renewed, and continued on the 5th, 8th, 11th, 12th, and 15th of May. On the morning of the 16th, at half-past four, as the sun rose and broad daylight streamed into the House, the division took place on the third reading, and the bill was passed by a majority of 98. Mr. Disraeli took part in the closing scene, contending that nothing in the condition of the country—not even in that of Ireland—justified so great a change as the one proposed. The change he attributed to the effects of the Anti-Corn-Law League—the cause of it must be traced to the energy and eloquence of a commercial federation, which, however, was more remarkable for these qualities than for knowledge of human nature or of political science. He next slid into an attack upon the Premier, stating that Sir R. Peel throughout his political life had traded on the intelligence of others; that his career was a great appropriation clause; that he was the burglar of other men's intellects; that in our whole history there was no statesman who had committed so much petty larceny on so great a scale. True, that minister avowed that he was not humiliated by his change of policy. Humiliation was a matter of feeling, depending much on the idiosyncrasy of the animal; but if Sir Robert Peel did not feel humiliated, his country ought. He had bought his party on the cheapest and had sold it on the dearest terms. Lord John Russell pointed out that Mr. Disraeli was much happier in invective than in argument, and that his speech had little relation to the bill before them.

Sir R. Peel informed the House that he foresaw the breaking up of political ties and the bitter attacks that would be the consequence of the change in his policy; but the smallest of the penalties which he contemplated was the continuance of the venomous assaults of Mr. Disraeli. He who now reviewed his whole political career, and charged him with continuous petty larcenies, had been willing in 1841 and 1842 to unite with him in his political fortunes, and had given him the strongest proof of political confidence.

"I have a strong belief," added Sir R. Peel, "that the greatest object which we or any other Government can contemplate should be to elevate the social condition of that class of people with whom we are brought into direct relationship by the exercise of the elective franchise. (Cheers.) I wish to convince them that our object has been so to apportion taxation that we shall relieve industry and labour from any undue burden, and transfer it so far as is consistent with the public good to those who are better enabled to bear it. I look to the present peace of this country; I look to the absence of all sedition—to the absence of any commitment

for a seditious offence; I look to the calm that prevails in the public mind; I look to the absence of all disaffection; I look to the increased and growing public confidence on account of the course you have taken in relieving trade from restrictions, and industry from unjust burdens; where there was dissatisfaction, I see contentment; where there was turbulence, I see peace; where there was disloyalty, I see loyalty; I see the disposition to confide in you, and not to agitate questions that are at the foundations of your institutions; deprive me of power to-morrow; you can be neither depriving me of the consciousness that I have exercised the powers committed to me from no corrupt or interested motives (loud cheers), nor for the gratification of ambition or any personal object. (Cheers.) But I have laboured to maintain peace abroad consistently with national honour and dignity—to uphold every public right—to increase public confidence in the justice of your decisions, and, by the means of equal law, to dispense with all coercive powers, relying on the attachment and loyalty of the great body of the people.” (Protracted cheering.)

Mr. Villiers’s speech most fitly closed this debate.

During the debates Mr. B. Disraeli and Lord G. Bentinck charged Sir R. Peel with urging Lord Liverpool in 1825 to settle the Catholic Question, and with joining in 1827 the persecution unscrupulously raised against Canning, under the pretence that he was about to undertake the settlement of the question. The charge was denied by Sir Robert Peel. “Among the libellers of Mr. Canning,” retorted an editor of that day, “Mr. Disraeli stood prominent as the most virulent and the most vindictive. The grave itself afforded no shelter from his persevering enmity.

‘So fierce or furious was his hate,
It passed the bounds of mortal fate,
And died not with the dead.’”

The quietude of the country in the midst of much privation and commercial suffering arose from the confident hope of the ministerial measures, and great interest was taken in the introduction of the bill into the House of Lords on the 25th of May. The body of the House was filled with a greater throng of peers than had been there since the days of Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill. The gallery was crowded, and altogether the scene was exceedingly animated, evincing the grave importance of the measure. The Earl of Ripon moved the second reading of the bill. Lord Stanley made a speech against the bill, which was a brilliant piece of declamation; he spoke for upwards of three hours, and during the whole of that time sustained the attention of the House. Lord Granville, in his first speech in the House of Lords, which was a neat and pointed one, advocated Free-trade principles; but the most philosophical of all the speeches was delivered by Earl Grey. He dispelled the visionary prairies, where harvests spring without labour, and corn might be had for the asking. “While it expounded the past, it illuminated the future. It was a

chart that laid down the rocks and quicksands to be avoided, and at the same time pointed out

‘ Each beacon light
For pilots to hold course aright.’ ”

At five o'clock in the morning of the 29th of May the division on the second reading took place, and was carried by a majority of 47. Mr. John Bright listened to most of the debates in the House of Lords.

The jubilation at the victory in passing the bill in the House of Lords was not confined to the factory operative and agricultural labourer, but even farmers rejoiced; and a farmer at Furness, Derbyshire, in order to mark the event, invited his neighbours to witness the christening and turning out to grass of three fine heifers, to which he gave the names of Cobden, Bright, and Wilson.

The quiet undercurrent of agricultural opinion was setting strongly and steadily towards Free Trade, and farmers adopted improvements for the better cultivation of their land. They were aware that while the Corn Laws were in operation agriculture was miserably depressed, and that no less than five committees of the House of Commons were appointed to investigate the causes of its misfortune, but the landed gentry and the aristocracy were against the abolition of laws that had done so much to increase the value of their property. The leaders of these gentlemen who professed to be learned filled their heads with the opinions of other learned professors, in preference to thinking for themselves, and their admirers followed them like pack-horses in the same track.

On the 25th of June, after seven years of popular agitation, and the last five months of Parliament conflict, the bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws was carried in the House of Lords; and, strange to state, the same night Sir R. Peel was defeated in the House of Commons by a majority of 73 on a Coercion Bill for Ireland, and his tenure of power was thus brought to a close. The noble baronet saw the issue from the beginning, and was aware that the prosperity of his country could be purchased only by a greater amount of self-sacrifice than was ever yet required of any minister.

After the division a large number of Free-traders remained in the lobby of the House, and as Sir Robert Peel passed through to the cloak-room he was greeted with several rounds of enthusiastic cheers. During the last six months he had been “the butt of every shaft which faction could aim, disappoint-

ment wing, and malignity tip with poison," but his labours were for the public good, and he held his position firmly until he had accomplished the abolition of the Corn Laws. On the evening of the 29th of June, in announcing in the House of Commons the resignation of the Cabinet, he thus concluded his speech, while the rows of squires on the back benches, whose lungs had many times bellowed defiance to the modest apostles, were silent :—

"The name which ought to be, and will be, associated with the success of those measures, is the name of a man who, acting I believe from pure and disinterested motives, has with untiring energy, by appeals to reason (loud cheers), enforced their necessity with an eloquence the more to be admired because it was unaffected and unadorned (cheers); the name which ought to be associated with the success of these measures is the name of Richard Cobden (loud and protracted cheering). Sir, I now close the address which it has been my duty to make to the House, thanking them sincerely for the favour with which they have listened to me in performing this last act of my official career. Within a few hours, probably, the power which I have held for the period of five years will be surrendered into the hands of another—without repining—I can say without complaint—with a more lively recollection of the support and confidence I have received than of the opposition which during the recent period I met with. (Cheers.) I shall leave office, I fear, with a name severely censured by many hon. gentlemen, who, on public principle, deeply regret the severance of party ties—who deeply regret the severance, not from any interested or personal motives, but because they believe fidelity to party engagements—the existence and maintenance of a great party—to constitute a powerful instrument of government; I shall surrender power severely censured, I fear again, by many hon. gentlemen, who, from no interested motive, have adhered to the principle of protection as important to the welfare and interest of the country; I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist—(loud cheering from the Opposition)—who, from less honourable motives maintained protection for his own individual benefit (continued cheering), but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of goodwill in those places which are the abodes of men whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow—a name remembered with expressions of goodwill, when they shall recreate their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice!"

Both sides of the House applauded, and when Sir Robert Peel was leaving the House of Commons, the multitude unbared their heads out of profound respect to him who finally assisted in permanently placing on the keystone that completed the arch over which was to be conveyed cheap bread to feed the poor; and this was the first step to the fulfilment of that grand vision of Christianity—the coming of that time towards which prophecy points and faith gazes—the time when the dividing walls of a narrow nationalism shall be thrown down, and all the nations of the world at heart be blended into one great and free commonwealth.

CHAPTER XXV.

CELEBRATING THE TRIUMPH OF THE LEAGUE.

Rejoicing at Rochdale—Anti-Corn-Law League Suspended—Handsome Present to Mr. R. Cobden—An Incident in the Early Career of Cobden—A National Gift to Mr. Bright—His Library.

THERE was great rejoicing throughout the country when the Corn Laws were abolished, and the men who pressed the Bill forward to its completion became illustrious, for—

“The path of duty is the way to glory.”

The staunch Free-traders of Rochdale being anxious to testify to their exultation at the passing of the Bill repealing the Corn Laws by ringing the bells of the parish church, the churchwardens held a meeting on the 26th of June, 1846, in the vestry, which gave them the full possession of the church, and the ringers were outside, ready for action as soon as they received instructions from within. At two o'clock a train from Manchester arrived, and a gentleman brought a newspaper, which contained a report of the passing of the Bill on the 25th in the House of Lords. The wardens, ringers, and a few friends proceeded to the belfry at once, and locked the door and barricaded it with a large piece of wood, to prevent any one without from interfering. This being done, the bells struck up a merry peal—

“In cadence sweet! now dying all away,
Now pealing loud again, and louder still,
Clear and sonorous as the gale comes on.”

But hark! what is that knocking? It is the vicar, Dr. Molesworth, demanding admittance. No attention was paid to him. His reverence went away, but soon returned, accompanied by his own warden, the clerk, and the grave-digger. Admittance being still refused, a crowbar was inserted by the grave-digger, which threatened the destruction of the door. Seeing it give way Mr. Procter, one of the wardens, opened it, and let the party in. The vicar ordered the ringers to desist, and leave the steeple immediately, requesting the clerk to record the names of those present. Mr. Procter said he had given the orders and would take the responsibility, and that the bells were under the

control of the wardens, and not the vicar. The clerk seized Mr. Thomas Livsey, a formidable Free-trader, by the collar, with the intention of turning him out, but finding that he had overestimated his strength, he was obliged to give up the task. Mr. Procter appealed to the vicar on the propriety of ringing the bells on such an occasion, but Dr. Molesworth would not consent, and the Free-traders consoled themselves with the fact that they had rung the bells for more than an hour in commemoration of the triumphant issue of their cause.

During the seven years' campaign, Rochdale had played an important part, and was one of the most Liberal supporters of the Anti-Corn-Law League; moreover, it was the first to celebrate the Free-trade victory, and, on the 8th of July, 1846, the celebration took place amid great enthusiasm. The morning opened with a drizzling rain, that continued almost without intermission during the whole of the day. The party, notwithstanding this, began to assemble before nine in the morning, and happiness beamed on every face, and—

“Swept the furrow'd lines of anxious thought away.”

There were hundreds of flags, made specially for the occasion. Some were very beautiful, being made of silk of the brightest hue. Those who had no flags or banners displayed their ingenuity in contriving substitutes. Branches of oak, sycamore, laurel, rhododendron, and holly, intermingled with flowers, were displayed before places of business and at private residences. The procession started from Cronkeyshaw, near Mr. Bright's factories, at ten o'clock. The following was the order:—Band; horsemen, three abreast; tradesmen, four abreast; band; the trades, four abreast—viz., bricklayers, ironfounders, stonemasons, printers, painters, and plasterers; machine-makers, skip-makers, corn-millers, who carried on a square tastily-decorated base a huge loaf, weighing about 60 lbs., the sides of which were inscribed with the names of Cobden and Bright. Beside it was carried on a thin pole a loaf of ridiculously diminutive dimensions, emblematic of the stinted weight given by Monopoly. Next followed the calico-printers, fullers, curriers, lamplighters, scavengers, band, and mill hands, four abreast, from the factories of E. and H. Howard, Jacob Tweedale and Sons, J. and R. Tweedale, Charles Haigh, Thomas Holland and Son, E. G. Kay, John Hargreaves, John Whitworth, John Rhodes and Bros., Samuel Taylor and Sons, James Kay and Sons; band, John Bright Bros. Here we may remark that one of the largest and gayest-looking devices in the procession belonged to this firm.

In a large waggon, drawn by six fine horses, there had been constructed a large apartment, the pillars, sides, and roof of which were neatly formed of intermingled leaves and flowers. Several large openings were left to serve as windows, and underneath the roof there were perched several stuffed birds. The interior of this floral house was occupied by merchants of various countries—Egyptian, Turkish, Greek, American, all in appropriate costume, and around and before them were arranged the various commodities in which they dealt, either as purchasers or sellers, such as raw cotton, twist, calico pieces, &c. Next followed the hands of Lord and Ashworth, John Butterworth and Bros., James Procter and Sons, Collinge and Ashworth, Booth and Hoyle; band; E. Briggs and Co., George Haworth, Pagan, Ogden, and Hastings and Co., Lumb and Boswell, J. and J. Bottomley, Robert Kelsall, John Ashworth and Sons; band; Kelsall and Bartlemore, William Holt, Shawcross, James Butterworth; band. The rear of the procession was brought up by fifty-five carriages, many of them belonging to the mill-owners of the town and neighbourhood. One of the carriages in the procession was that of Mr. John Bright, containing the hon. member himself, Mr. Elihu Burritt, who was then the American Consul at Birmingham, Mr. Henry Clapp, of the United States, and Mr. Henry Rawson, one of the executive council of the League. Another carriage, drawn by four horses, contained Mr. Thomas Woolley and Mr. Hickin, secretary of the League. Amongst the other carriages were those of Mr. Thomas Bright, Miss Bright, Mr. William Petrie, Mr. John Petrie, Mr. Joseph Schofield, Mr. James Tweedale, Mr. Abraham Tweedale, Mr. James King, Mr. Henry Kelsall, Mr. George Ashworth, and Mr. Midgley. The number of persons that walked in the procession was estimated at 12,000. It occupied one hour and thirty-five minutes in passing a certain point on the route. The workpeople of Messrs. Bright numbered 700, and carried 25 silk flags. The following gentlemen on horseback, and bearing white batons, acted as marshals:—Mr. Jacob Bright, jun., Mr. Samuel Taylor, jun., Mr. G. Procter, Mr. Charles Walker, Mr. Thomas Livsey, Mr. Grattan Bright, Mr. Samuel Heape, Mr. William James Sleath, Mr. Samuel Bright, Mr. Thomas Hoyle, Mr. Robert Ashworth, Mr. Robert Tweedale, Mr. R. L. Tweedale, Mr. Charles Heape, Mr. James Pilling, Mr. Samuel Stott, Mr. Thomas B. Stephens, Mr. R. Leach, Mr. E. T. Jones, Mr. William Petrie, Mr. John Gibson and Mr. John Pagan. The manufacturers and other employers treated their workpeople to sumptuous dinners. In the evening, a meeting of Messrs. Bright's workpeople was held

in the school-room connected with the mill; Mr. Jacob Bright occupied the chair. Mr. Elihu Burritt, in the course of his speech, said that years ago the hearty sons of labour of this land were summoned to the fields in Europe to crush Napoleon Buona-parte, and those labourers were promised glory and immortality, and the everlasting credit of this nation, for fighting. After thousands upon thousands had fallen, and poured out their blood on the earth, there was a triumph proclaimed. The news of the great victory of Waterloo rang through the land; and perhaps the bells of the Rochdale Parish Church, although they were not permitted to be rung on the consummation of this glorious conquest—the abolition of the Corn Laws—rang out in triumph for the bloody victory of Waterloo. A great conquest it was proclaimed to be, and gladness seemed to fill the hearts of the people of this kingdom; but he would ask them whether upon any victory achieved by the sword, however splendid it might be called, they ever received any more food or freedom, or any more hope of immortality? In connection with that sanguinary victory of Waterloo, there was a scene that was ever present to him. A few years ago the bones of those hard-labouring men who perished in that gory field were gathered up and imported into this country—the bones of those men who were promised glory and immortality, and the undying gratitude of the country—and those bones were burned and ground to lime, and sold to the farmers by the bushel to manure their fields. He rejoiced that day to see that they had recognised the power which had brought cheap bread to their doors. It did his heart good when he looked upon their standards, and saw in large letters, waving to the glistening eyes of the multitude, “Peace on earth and good-will to men.” He wished that a League might be started—a great League of universal brotherhood, which his kinsmen on the other side of the Atlantic might join, and that all might be pledged for ever, that, come what would, they would never imbrue their hands in the blood of their fellow-beings any more. Mr. Henry Clapp also addressed the meeting. Mr. John Bright felt disposed to say a few words with reference to this particular day, as to the manner in which Rochdale had celebrated it.

“From the beginning of the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws I believe that Rochdale has done as much as, probably more than, any other town in the kingdom, of the same means and population, to forward the great cause. (Cheers.) But I believe there is no town in the kingdom which has had a greater or more enduring interest in this question than Rochdale. You have here two great staple trades of the North of England, the cotton and the woollen trades; and you have

also coal and stone; in fact, such is your position that you have every advantage which a manufacturing population can possess. You have a world spread out before you anxious to receive the produce of your spindles and looms, and to return back to you, in greater abundance, I believe, than you ever had, the riches and plenty with which God has blessed the various countries of the earth. (Cheers.) Why it was found that this town, after having endured the tyranny more odious, I believe, than that which took the shape of war,—after having struggled for several years continuously, with heavy sacrifices, to repeal that law—after having the front ranks amongst the assembling forces, which gradually gathered strength until the enemy has surrendered without conditions; I say, it was but fitting that a town so circumstanced, and which has so acted, should take a front rank in the rejoicing and celebration and ceremonies which the day of victory has given birth to. The heavens certainly have not smiled propitiously—there has been more rain than was desirable, and less sunshine; but if it was not outside, there was sunshine in your hearts; and as I passed through the ranks of the people, and stood to watch the procession, or those who formed it, I thought I could see in their countenances an acknowledgment that this was a day of deliverance, a day to be marked with a white stone, as one on which they and their children had been delivered from tyranny and injustice which no Government should ever have perpetrated, or which those same people at least could no longer endure. Now, when this Corn Law has gone, I take it that we shall have a better state of things. Not that people can live without work, or have large incomes without toiling at some honest industry; but that there will be a great demand for labour, and more regular income for those who live by labour; for such years as 1841 and 1842, when your employers were making no profits, and when thousands of your fellow-workmen were getting no work—such times as those will not return. We shall have a steadier trade, a steadier increase of prosperity, a steadier profit for capital, steadier wages for workpeople, and I trust that these things shall cause a continuance of that harmony and good feeling which now happily prevail amongst all classes in this great populous manufacturing district. I am persuaded that there are a great number of employers disposed to do justice to their workpeople, and I believe that amongst the vast majority of the workpeople there is a disposition to do justice to their employers. (Cheers.) And if in both classes we cultivate these feelings—justice to each other, kindness to each other, sympathy and respect and honour for each other—if we cultivate all this—I do look forward for a great and striking and permanent improvement of this district; and if there be political institutions which it may become us, before long, to struggle to remove, I trust that as we have struggled for this great blessing, and achieved this great conquest, we may struggle in a like spirit of harmony for other gains that are before us; and that, whilst endeavouring to improve the state of things around us, we may look into our homes and houses and cottages—that we may educate our children, and see cordial sympathy and co-operation spread amongst the whole society of which we are members.” (Cheers.)

And so ended the celebration of that memorable event in Rochdale; and the inhabitants felt proud of the conspicuous part Mr. Bright had taken in procuring cheap bread for those steeped in misery, and of the well-earned homage paid to him in other towns. His honest devotion to the cause of peaceable improvement, his labours bestowed in advancing the happiness of his fellow-creatures, his losses encountered in defence of the rights of the oppressed, are glorious titles to the veneration of the good and wise. He had the satisfaction of knowing that he had done his duty, and the consolation of feeling “a peace above all earthly dignities, a still and quiet conscience,” for “blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy.” Stars, garters, and ribbons glitter upon those who have taken part in accomplishing less noble work; and who,

perhaps, attach more importance to the brightness of their garments than to the welfare of mankind.

Time has shown that the outcry of the Protectionists that Free Trade in corn would ruin England was altogether founded on fiction. According to their statements England was to descend in the scale of nations, her constitution to become not worth the parchment it was written on, and her wealth and prosperity were to be beyond all hope. Yet the fact was that when the obnoxious laws were abolished England became more prosperous, her people better fed and more contented, and the farmers' condition was improved.

A great meeting of the Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League was held in the large room of the Manchester Town Hall on the 2nd of July, 1846, for the purpose of considering what course the League should take now that the bill for the repeal of the Corn Laws had received the Royal assent. There was present a large assemblage of gentlemen who had taken a prominent part in the accomplishment of the great victory. Mr. George Wilson was in the chair. Mr. Richard Cobden moved "That an Act of Parliament having been passed, providing for the abolition of the Corn Laws in February, 1849, it is deemed expedient to suspend the active operation of the Anti-Corn-Law League." Mr. John Bright, in seconding the resolution, said :—

"We need not raise a monument of stone or brass, or of any other durable material, to the honour of this League. If we have not been mistaken for the seven years which we have worked ; if we are not mistaken now—and I think I may say for all who have been working in this cause that we do not believe ourselves to be mistaken, and that we are confirmed in our convictions—we shall find the result of the measure now obtained to be extended freedom to all classes in this country—with extended freedom, increased security—an increased security not only for property, but also for labour and for the rewards and enjoyments which are procured by labour ; and I trust—I believe (I speak conscientiously, and after years of consideration) I believe that we have overturned the great obstacle which sat in the path of the people of this country—that we now stand, as it were, on the threshold of a new career. And if we have the spirit, the energy, and the intelligence, and the great and noble qualities of which we boast ourselves, and which we have to some extent seen exhibited in the working of this League—if we still possess those qualities and still bring them into action, I know not any height to which this nation may not aspire ; I know not whether we may not in all good things, as we have often done in all bad things, lead forward all other nations in the same career." (Great cheering.)

Mr. Cobden acquainted those present that they were indebted to the Queen, who had favoured their cause as one of humanity and justice, and three hearty cheers were given for Her Majesty ; and so ended the labours of the League, after completing the work or which it was originally called into being.

Thirty years after this event, Mr. Bright thus beautifully describes the blessings which flowed from it :—

“And now, Sir, if you cast your eyes over the globe, what is it you see? Look at Canada, look at the United States, whether on the Atlantic Sea or on the Pacific slope; look at Chili, look at the Australian colonies, look at the great and rich province of Bengal, look on the shores of the Black Sea or of the Baltic, wherever the rain falls, wherever the sun shines, wherever there are markets and granaries and harvest fields, there are men and women everywhere gathering that which comes to this country for the sustenance of her people (loud applause); and our fleets traverse every sea and visit every port, and bring us the food which only thirty years ago the laws of this civilised and Christian country denied to its people. (Cheers.) You find it in Holy Writ, ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.’ We have put Holy Writ into an Act of Parliament, and since then of that fulness every man and woman and little child in this country may freely and abundantly partake.” (Cheers.)

In September, 1845, Mr. R. Cobden discovered that through devoting so much of his time to public affairs his business had been neglected and had fallen off considerably. His most intimate friends, learning the position of his affairs, raised a voluntary contribution, which amounted to £76,759 14s 0d. The inhabitants of Rochdale contributed £314 8s. 9d. towards this sum. Mr. Cobden, in acknowledging the munificent contributions, stated :—

“At the time of the dissolution of the Anti-Corn-Law League circumstances had determined me to withdraw from public life and to devote myself for some time to the exclusive care of my private affairs, when the proposal which was unexpectedly made to raise a fund for me by public subscription, and the generous response with which it was met from all parts of the kingdom, induced me to abandon my determination. Since my return from the Continent, I have, by the advice of my friends, withdrawn altogether from the risks and anxieties of business. By this arrangement I have incurred some heavy sacrifices; but through your liberality, I am left in possession of an ample competence.”

The noble subscription indicated to what extent Mr. Cobden’s services had been appreciated, and the wish that he should still pursue his brilliant career. There is no doubt that if he had applied that arduous energy to his own business which he devoted to public affairs, he could have realised a handsome fortune. However, he neglected his own personal interests for the public welfare when he was scarcely in a position to afford it. He was remarkable for his sincerity and generosity, and his reputation was spotless; and where such qualities as these are wanting,

“Men are but gilded loam, or painted clay.”

Mr. Cobden, in writing to a friend in 1856, thus referred to his early business life :—

“I began business in partnership with two other young men, and we only mustered a thousand pounds amongst us, and more than half of it was borrowed.

We all got on the "Peveril of the Peak" coach, and went from London to Manchester in the, at that day, marvellously short space of twenty hours. We were literally so ignorant of Manchester houses that we called for a directory at the hotel, and turned to the list of "calico printers," theirs being the business with which we were acquainted, and they being the people from whom we felt confident we could obtain credit. And why? Because we knew we should be able to satisfy them that we had advantages, from our large connections, our knowledge of the best branch of the business in London, and our superior taste in design, which would insure success. We introduced ourselves to Fort Brothers and Co., a rich house, and told our tale, honestly concealing nothing. In less than two years from 1830 we owed them forty thousand pounds for goods which they had sent to us in Watling Street, upon no other security than our characters and knowledge of our business. I had frequently talked with them in later times upon the great confidence they showed in men who avowed that they were not possessed of £200 each. Their answer was that they would always prefer to trust young men with connections and with a knowledge of their trade, if they knew them to possess character and ability, to those who started with capital without these advantages, and that they had acted on this principle successfully *in all parts of the world*. We did not disappoint them or ourselves. In 1834-1835 our stock-takings showed a net balance of £20,000 a year profit. Then I began to write pamphlets and to talk politics, and from that moment I ceased to make money, and in 1846, when the League finished its labours, my children must have been beggars, had not my neighbours, who knew my circumstances, originated the subscription which restored me to independence. I took the money without shame, because I had earned it. If money had been my sole object in life, I should have been a more successful man by sticking to my calicoes, for my partners have grown richer than I by doing so, and young men taken into the concern since I left have made fortunes. I may add that the original formation of the partnership, and the whole scheme of the business, sprang exclusively from myself."

The Englishman, although of a retiring disposition, certainly stands foremost in sincerity and solid goodness of heart. He may not have the rich humour of the Italian or the Spaniard, nor the vivacity and gaiety of the French, but his appreciation of benevolence and nobility of soul often finds expression in something more tangible than outward demonstration. The abolition of the Corn Laws was brought about by the instrumentality of a large body of gentlemen, yet the contest was led on and directed by a few master-minds.

"By how much more the ship her safety owes
To him who steers, than him that only rows:
By how much more the captain merits praise,
Than he who fights, and, fighting, but obeys."

A deep sense of gratitude was felt by the nation to Mr. Bright for his arduous exertions and influence in bringing about the abolition of the Corn Laws, and a few friends met in Rochdale, on the 4th of July, 1846, to devise some scheme by which they could testify to their approval of his labours. His fellow-townsmen bore testimony "to the great sacrifices he has made—the unwearied devotion he has manifested—the untiring energy with which he has laboured in the good cause. The whole country can testify to the powerful influence which, during a protracted agitation of seven years' duration, his energy and eloquence have exercised upon the final issue of the contest."

It was no sooner broached in Rochdale than the praiseworthy object was warmly approved of in other towns, and a subscription was easily set in motion and £5,048 8s. 1d. were contributed by 3,647 subscribers, and the towns and villages which responded to the call of the committee amounted to 172.

The testimonial took the form of a library of 1,200 volumes, the selection of which was left to the hon. gentleman. From the bent of the man it is easy to call up the stamp of the books chosen. There are amongst them many of the brightest gems of English literature. History and biography fill up the bulk of the space, but the place of honour is given to the works of the great poets, whose thoughts, purified and condensed in simple, terse diction, are to be found in all the speeches of Mr. Bright. Here, as in one focus, are concentrated the rays of nearly all the great luminaries.

Mr. Bright has found himself strengthened by the wholesome study of the past, and, like the matine bee, extracted from whatever he settled upon additional information and sweets. He understands the injunction of Wordsworth :—

“With gentle hand
Touch, for there is a spirit in the leaves.”

His selections from the poets are numerous, and he derives much delight in reading them. The books are placed in a casket worthy of them. A large oak bookcase, running the whole length of one side of the library at “One Ash,” forms part of the testimonial. Its design is in consonance with the deed to signalise which it was presented. The supports between the large glass panels are elaborately carved into sheaves of corn, figs, grapes, apples, and pears, while surmounting the cornice is a relief showing a vessel homeward bound, and on the quay representations of barrels of flour and bales of cotton. “Free Trade” is the burden of the design. Needless to say the bookcase and its contents form the most prominent features of the library. Two other sides of the room are also occupied with bookcases, filled with miscellaneous literature, and the little remaining space is devoted to portraits of Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Daniel O’Connell, Joseph Hume, Charles P. Villiers, and a bust of Mr. Gladstone in mature life. His cabinet is placed between two windows, which command a view of the lawn, beyond which, through the encircling trees, is the town and the distant hills.

Here it is that the right hon. gentleman when at home delights to spend most of his time. His favourite walk is on the terrace in front of his residence, which commands a fine

view of Rochdale in the valley below : with its forest of factory chimneys,

“ Steeple-towers,
And spires whose silent finger points to heaven.”

The old parish church, in the yard of which was delivered the celebrated “tombstone speech” that heralded the abolition of Church Rates, stands out sturdily through the smoke of the town; while far away a solitary clump of trees on the knoll, breaking the sky-line, marks Tandle Hill, where the Chartists met for training. Those days are gone, and a generation has arisen which, viewing with tenderness the faults of the patriots who manfully struggled for their political freedom, must endorse the policy of John Bright as against that of the Chartists. Their cry was, “The Charter, then cheap bread;” his counsel was, “Cheap bread first.” Cheap bread came, and brought with it the stamina by which the people of this land were enabled to develop a waiting, patient policy, of forcing from unwilling Governments the concessions which open violence could never have obtained. Away in the distance, on the left of the terrace, ranges Blackstone Edge, which divides Lancashire from Yorkshire. Over this mountainous district the legions of Rome constructed a road, which the effacing influences of fifteen centuries have yet been compelled to spare, and which still crops out in sturdy squares of stone pavement. Those soldiers had their day of glory, but it has passed like sounds away. In the remembrance of Mr. Bright, pack-horses, with their tinkling bells, traversed this mountain and its moorlands, and later on the stage-coach made its appearance up the winding roadway into Yorkshire. In those days the “White House” that is perched nearly on the summit of the mountain, and is plainly visible, was a famous hostelry where the jaded travellers and smoking steeds were refreshed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MONOPOLISTS' RETALIATION.

Prophecies regarding Bright—Villiers's and Kinglake's opinion of Bright and Cobden—Mr. Bright entertained by the Corporation of Durham—The new Cabinet—The Ten Hours Bill—Mr. Bright's opposition—His workpeople in favour of the Bill—He consents to become a candidate for Manchester.

MR. BRIGHT having completed the task which had called forth his best energies and given a strong impetus to his oratorical powers, it was circulated as the general opinion among his opponents that, in his earnestness, "his defects were likely to have been overlooked in the strong light which the triumphant success of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation threw round the leaders of that movement;" and it was further stated that, "had he been left to pursue his path alone, it is more than probable that he would never have emerged from the dead level of the society in which he had moved; or that if he had attained any eminence at all, it would have been to achieve a distinction not more illustrious than that of a noisy and arrogant orator of a parish vestry."

These critics seemed to overlook the fact that in the House of Commons, where able speakers and critics are always to be found, Mr. Bright had gained an honourable position as a rising orator, and had been applauded by *both* sides of the House. The opposition that he encountered brought forth abilities that might have otherwise lain dormant. "A certain amount of opposition is a great help to a man. Kites rise against, not with, the wind. Even a head wind is better than nothing. No man ever worked his voyage in a dead calm." Still, it must be admitted that, owing to the times and circumstances by which he was surrounded, his powers were not fully developed. There had certainly been sufficient to call forth his antagonistic and debating skill; but the artistic and fascinating style of which he is now master had as yet to be evolved by circumstances and cultivation.

"Perfection is attained by slow degrees,
She requires the hand of time."

Erroneous judgments are always, sooner or later, reversed by time. In an evil hour for himself did Bishop Hacket call

Milton "a petty schoolboy scribbler." Winstanley was not more fortunate in saying that "his fame was gone out like a candle in a stink;" and Burnet drew upon himself more popular censure by the unlucky sentence in which he spoke of *one* Prior than by all the inaccuracies of his statements and his style.

The Right Hon. C. P. Villiers has kindly furnished the following interesting information for this biography:—

"I have been a close observer of Mr. Bright's public career for the last forty years, and nobody, I am sure, could be found who would more readily and amply bear testimony to the extraordinary ability that he displayed in all his addresses on public questions of interest during that time. It was, indeed, an observation made by many, and in which I shared myself, that during the fiercest times of the great Anti-Corn-Law struggle, and when he and Mr. Cobden used to be thrown upon their defence of the proceedings of the League out of the House, that Mr. Bright was thought to be far more prompt and effective in his replies than Mr. Cobden; for though the latter used to assail the Prime Minister (Sir Robert Peel) with peculiar severity, owing to his conviction (often expressed to myself) that he (Sir Robert Peel) was not sincere in supporting the Corn Laws, yet Mr. Bright used, both in and out of the House, boldly and plainly to charge the whole land-owning class with the deliberate selfishness of their Corn Law policy, and was always ready to meet the reproaches with which he was fiercely visited in consequence (by his opponents in the House). I am, however, of opinion, with many others, that Mr. Bright became a much more finished orator after the repeal of the Corn Laws than he had ever been before, as if he had almost taken pains with himself to acquire the art of speaking. In some of his speeches, indeed, especially when he was advocating the lowering of the suffrage (when it was difficult to raise any feeling on the subject), and also in favour of disestablishing the Irish Church, he was not exceeded in style and effect by any of the greatest efforts made by Mr. Gladstone himself."

Mr. Kinglake, who had no great sympathy with the principles advocated by John Bright and Cobden, acknowledged their argumentative power and their influence over the House of Commons, in these words:—

"The two orators had shown with what a strength, with what a masterly skill, with what patience, with what a high courage they could carry a scientific truth through the storm of politics. They had shown that they could arouse and govern assenting thousands, who listened to them with delight—that they could bend the House of Commons—that they could press their creed upon a Prime Minister, and put upon his mind so hard a stress, that after a while he felt it to be a torture and a violence to his reason to have to make a stand against them. Nay, more. Each of these gifted men had proved that he could go bravely into the midst of angry opponents, and show them their fallacies one by one—destroy their favourite theories before their very faces, and triumphantly argue them down."

As for those whose names have been handed down to us as eminent in oratory, we find them, in the course of their lives, seldom fatigued with poring over their studies. They devoted much time to grammar, music, and poetry; painting, sculpture, and architecture; mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and history—subjects that they cultivated as so many handmaids of eloquence. Even at advanced periods of life they attended the schools of the rhetoricians, exercising themselves constantly in elocution, endeavouring to attain gracefulness in gesture, correct-

ness in pronunciation, and a flowing and varied modulation of voice. They travelled into foreign countries for the purpose of receiving instruction in foreign schools. What sensibility must an audience have possessed for whose ear such speakers thought it necessary to give harmony to their periods, and whose tastes they found capable of discriminating a common from a graceful expression, and a loose from a compact style ! Their language possessed the spell which awakened or composed the emotions ; and whether they had to contend with power or prejudice, with the passions of the rude or the interests of the enlightened, they bore down every obstacle by the irresistible torrent of their eloquence. But where, in this cold climate, shall we find an audience capable of allowing their feelings to be wound up to such a height that they will recognise and exult in the sway of such extravagant oratory ? Mr. Burke, in the fine frenzy of his indignation against the French Revolution, produced a dagger from his bosom, one night in the House of Commons, as the most expressive emblem of the designs which the Republicans had in contemplation. But what was the effect of this extraordinary illustration ? Some members deemed the sage mad, others scarcely suppressed their laughter ; and his most attached friends blushed for the eccentricity of the thing. He was mistaken in thinking that his auditors were as ardently excited as himself, or that they were sufficiently prepared for such an illustration as this. For him it was scarcely strong enough ; for them it was extravagant.

Mr. Bright has never undergone a course of training in elocution. His ambition was to speak plainly, so that he might be understood by the working class, and to give his words force without theatrical gesture. His earnestness in the cause brought out his natural oratorical powers, and together with his thorough study of the subject matter upon which he speaks, produces the influence he exercises over his audience. One of the chief excellences of his style is the power of adorning barren and tame subjects, elevating them into something piquant and interesting. It cannot be called florid in style, for it is the luxuriance of natural feeling and fancy. The summer rose, in unfolding its leaves to the dawn, is not less guilty of vanity, or the hawthorn that puts forth its blossoms in the genial warmth of spring, of affecting to be fine. He looks abroad with the eye of a poet, with the minuteness of a naturalist, and the comprehensiveness of a historian ; and the intelligence he gleans he devotes for the benefit of mankind.

Mr. John Bright's constituents determined to celebrate the

event of the abolition of the Corn Laws by inviting their member to dinner. The invitation came through the Mayor and Corporation of Durham, who were "desirous of testifying their high admiration of his independent and honourable character, his efficient services in Parliament, and, above all, his eminent advocacy of the recent important national measure." The celebration took place on the 15th of August, 1846. The Mayor, Mr. John Bramwell, presided, and gave as a toast the health of "Mr. John Bright, the worthy member for the City of Durham." Mr. Bright, in responding, said:—

"I am disposed to take this meeting as an approval that I have not left altogether unfulfilled the promises and expectations which I held out three years ago; and I shall also take it as some proof that the inhabitants of Durham are willing to give their sanction to this great measure which has passed the Legislature during the present Session, and to those great and sacred principles which were uppermost in the minds of the electors of this city at the time I became your representative in Parliament. (Cheers.) You all know the accident that brought me to this city three years ago: and, although it cannot be denied that the schism which had taken place in the ranks of our opponents weakened them and strengthened us, yet it must be admitted that there was something in the principles laid before the electors of Durham which raised them to more virtuous action than constituencies are generally noted for, and which tended to bring about the success of that great and glorious measure—the repeal of the Corn Laws. (Cheers.) We never said we should resort to force to obtain the political revolution we sought to effect. That would have done nothing for the people in this struggle. I believe if you employed those weapons you would greatly err; but, if you go on as you have gone on—converting men and not destroying them—they can never rise against you, for they come and join the same ranks as yourselves; and, more than that, these revolutions are not to be effected by merely vapouring about freedom. There have been demagogues in this country whose hands are never out of their kid gloves, and whose feet are always in boots of japanned leather. (Laughter.) Now these are the men who can never obtain such triumphs as have been obtained this year. (Cheers.) It requires that they should be not only themselves the advocates of a just policy, but also that they should show their willingness to make sacrifices, and to work continually until the public mind is leavened and saturated with the truths they would teach, and that this is the only way, in this age, whereby great and beneficial changes can be effected. (Cheers.) I do not wish to boast of myself, and all those with whom I acted, but I do think that when men for many years have seen the necessity of the application of a great principle, and have devoted themselves without intermission for its establishment, and at length succeed against the most tremendous obstacles—I do think they have a right to look to their fellow-countrymen for some degree of approval—that, at least, they are men entitled to be heard when they express their opinions on any great national or political question." (Cheers.)

On the 29th of June Sir Robert Peel appeared in the House of Commons for the last time as minister, and Lord John Russell was sent for by Her Majesty and consented to form a cabinet. Earl Grey accepted the post of Secretary for the Colonies, and Lord Palmerston returned to the Foreign Office. Reverting, however, to his previous management of foreign affairs, we find that it was not creditable to him. An Afghan expedition which he inaugurated terminated disastrously. He undertook to force upon the Afghans a sovereign whom they did not desire, and made war against the prince of their choice. But even this error would not have led to the slaughter of Macnaghten, and that

disastrous retreat in which there was but one survivor out of 16,500 men, had it not been for the appointment to the command at Cabul of a gouty Waterloo general, whose utter unfitness was paralleled sixteen years later at Cawnpore. Another matter was a quarrel with the Emperor of China, brought about in a manner discreditable to this country, and terminating to the advantage of the opium smugglers, whose cause Lord Palmerston espoused, although he told them that they were in the wrong. The only other foreign question of importance which arose during the Peel administration was the Tahiti dispute, which at one time threatened to involve England and France in war, but which, by the moderation of Lord Aberdeen and M. Guizot, was settled amicably.

The agitation in favour of the Ten Hours Bill followed upon the heels of the abolition of the Corn Laws, and its origin was attributed to the Protectionists, who it was alleged wished to retaliate upon the Free-traders. It was certainly an unaccountable paradox that noble lords and gentlemen should come from amongst their farm labourers—who in those days had barely a change of clothing, and scarcely enough of potatoes, bacon, and bread to eat, and seldom if ever were able to get beef or mutton for dinner—should come to the relief of the factory operatives, who were better fed, better clothed, and better lodged.

Mr. J. Bright, in a speech in Birmingham in November, 1868, alluding to this event, said:—

“I think I ought to be held, politically at least, to be a person of almost stainless character, because I find that when they have anything to say to the working men about me they generally go back to rather more than twenty years ago. I could not go back nearly so far if I were speaking about them. (Laughter.) They tell the working men of Birmingham that I was one of the opponents of the Factory Act. Well, if it were true that the Factory Act was all good, and that the opponents of it were all wrong, it still would not be wondered at that I—who was myself concerned in the trade which was to be mainly affected, I who represented the great city of Manchester—it would not be wondered at so much if I took in some degree a one-sided view of the question. I do not pretend to infallibility, but this is a fact which they never care to tell you—that when the Bill was introduced into the House of Commons, about the year 1845, at a time when the manufacturing interests of the country were assailing the Corn Laws with constantly-increasing force of argument, it was thought a very lucky thing that a Protectionist Parliament should be able to assail the manufacturers through the Factory Bill. When Sir Robert Peel was in power, on the first great vote which made it apparent that the bill was going to pass, the whole Protectionist party, joined by some of the Whigs, voted against us, and against the government of Sir Robert Peel; the Protectionist party for the reason I said, and the Whigs for a reason that was no better—that they might join some of Peel's opponents in worrying him. And now you will probably be surprised to hear—I have no doubt our Conservative-Liberal-constitutional candidate will be surprised to learn—the men that, I believe in that very year, I found with me when I went into the lobby against the Factory Bill. I am not positive as to all of them, I speak merely from memory, and I have made no recent reference to the particulars, but I believe I was in the same lobby with Lord Derby and Lord Chelmsford, then both in the House of Commons, with General Peel, with Sir J. Packington, and many other leaders of the Conservative party. Perhaps it was bad company, but at least

I think the supporters of those gentlemen now ought to admit that, if they have nothing since then to lay to my charge, my character will at least bear comparison with these eminent chiefs of their party. (Cheers.) And bear in mind, too, that the great party which on that occasion voted for that Bill, voted in the same session of Parliament to keep your loaf small. They had not much affection for the working man when with one vote they diminished the size of his loaf, and with another vote they lessened the number of hours during which he was permitted to earn it. Why, as to short time, there is no man in England who has ever been more in favour of short time work than I have been. My own hours of work are sometimes far too long, and I believe that it is true of the great majority of the people of this country, but I believe that if the Government of England had been in past times prudent, economical and just, and even if it were to become so now, every man in England might have his daily labour lessened by not less than two hours without the slightest diminution of his comforts."

Advocates went through the length and breadth of the land urging the people to agitate for "Less work, and more wages;" but this was no party measure, for it was supported and opposed by members of both parties. However, Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Joseph Hume, and other prominent Free-traders, opposed the measure, arguing that as the people in factories were generally paid by the piece, the curtailment of two hours' labour would reduce their income proportionately, which would be a serious loss to the working class. Mr. Bright contended that "the real object of the promoters of the measure was not to take care of the children under eighteen, and women of all ages, but to interfere by law with the labour of all persons, of whatever age and whatever sex they might be, who were engaged in the manufactures of this country, and to give to these classes that measure of legislative protection—he used the word 'protection' in the same sense in which it had been used by all who were in favour of monopolies—a protection that would diminish the hours of labour while it would continue a rate of wages which, from the days of Sadler till the present time, was clearly a rate higher than labour in a free market could command." Mr. Bright further admitted that the working men would prefer working ten hours to twelve; he believed it would be better for them to work ten hours than twelve, but he also believed that if it were put to them anywhere that they should work ten hours a day and have only ten hours' wages, there was not a single case in which a majority would vote for such a change. In several cases the offer had been made and refused. He would like, just as much as Lord John Manners, to see the people playing at cricket and climbing maypoles; but the noble lord never made a greater mistake than when he said the operative classes would be content to accept a diminished rate of wages. The relations between the manufacturers and operatives were steadily improving, and he believed a diminution in the hours of labour could and would be made without the interference of Parliament.

When Mr. Bright pleaded for Free-trade, supported by the acclamations of the people, he was described by his opponents as a "demagogue;" so the time came for testing how little of that character belonged to him. It was soon observable that it mattered little to him whether a claim which he considered, rightly or wrongly, to be injurious to the nation, came from the territorial, the military, or the working class; and it was not likely that he who had given the best of the energies of his life to break down an arbitrary limitation of the people's food supply should be inimical to the real interests of women and children. "He believed that parliamentary intervention in the relations between capital and labour would prove radically injurious to both, and that an enlightened public opinion and the infallible action of economic law would give to the working classes the power to right their own wrongs. He did not hesitate for a moment to avow his unpopular convictions. He was unsuccessful; and there is no practical ground for now regretting the anticipation by legal enactment of the certain action of natural processes. The immense access of commercial prosperity created by Free-trade, and by the almost concurrent discoveries of the new gold mines, floated the country easily over any dangers that might otherwise have resulted from statutory interference with freedom of contract. Later industrial history, however, showing the enormous growth of the power of labour, penetrating even the dull consciousness of the agricultural workman, to protect its own interests, has at least vindicated the reliance of the economists on the humane tendency of a free natural law."

Mr. Bright's workpeople and his manager, Mr. Samuel Tweedale, forwarded a petition to the House of Commons, which was presented by Lord John Manners, in favour of the Ten Hours Bill, and their worthy and honourable employer admired their spirit of independence. Shortly after Mr. Bright meeting Mr. Tweedale crossing Cronkeyshaw Common, they had a friendly discussion of the subject, Mr. Bright contending that the reduction of the hours of labour should have been by mutual agreement, and that he did not like the Government to interfere between capital and labour. Many years before this event Mr. Bright had waited upon manufacturers in the Rochdale district and tried to persuade them to reduce the working hours to eleven, but as the majority were not in favour of his proposal, the matter was allowed to stand in abeyance. Ultimately the Bill became law in June, 1847, and it answered perhaps better than its opponents expected.

After the Ten Hours Bill was passed, Mr. William Taylor, manufacturer, of Vale Mill, Shaw, a Conservative, accompanied

by a gentleman of his own political creed, came to Fieldhouse Mills in search of Mr. Samuel Tweedale, the manager, thinking that he might be either discharged or under notice for having headed the petition in favour of the Ten Hours Bill, and, if so, intending to assist him in procuring another situation. To their great surprise they met him in the mill-yard, and Mr. Taylor told him that they had expected that he would have been discharged. Mr. Tweedale assured them that Mr. John Bright permitted his workpeople to express openly their own opinions, without using any coercion. Mr. Taylor thereupon energetically remarked, "By Jove! that is very fair," and ever after entertained the highest opinion of Mr. John Bright, and nothing pleased him better than to listen to any story about the illustrious native of Rochdale.

The approach of the general election prompted the Liberals of Manchester to try to secure the services of Mr. John Bright to represent them in the House of Commons. Accordingly on the 14th of October, 1846, a meeting of the Reform Association of that city was held, and it was resolved, with only two dissentients, that Mr. J. Bright should be requested to offer himself as a candidate for the representation of Manchester at the ensuing general election, and a deputation waited on the hon. member. Mr. Bright consented to be put in nomination should the recommendation of the Association prove acceptable to the electors. In a letter written at Rochdale, dated the 15th of October, 1846, Mr. Bright explained:—

"I am induced to consent to become a candidate for the suffrages of the electors of Manchester in the belief that to a large extent my sentiments accord with theirs, and because my sympathies are bound up in an especial manner with the advancement of the interests of that great and industrious population of which Manchester may be deemed the centre."

A meeting of the electors was held in the Free-trade Hall on the 18th of November, Mr. George Wilson occupying the chair, and, in the course of his speech, he said:—

"It is well known that the firm with which he is connected, Jacob Bright and Sons, and latterly Bright and Brothers, has for years stood second to none in the good estimation in which it is held by those who depend upon it for support. (Cheers.) Well, he is that at home. What is he from home? We know what he has been in this movement—in the movement in connection with the League, side by side with Mr. Cobden, in agricultural meetings and in meetings in the manufacturing districts, often three and four in a week, in the winter months. I am prepared to say that Mr. Bright has rallied, by his own unaided eloquence, the Free-trade party to efforts which could never have been made in so successful a mode unless we had had his services. (Much cheering.) He has for three years been a member of the House of Commons; and during that period he has not been one of those useful, steady-going, respectable, ministerial sort of members, who vote just as the ministry require for the moment. From the first he took up a position in that House among the first-class minds in that brilliant assembly. (Loud cheers.) It was the fashion

to retreat whenever League doctrines were mentioned, or the League was attacked, as a subject that was unpopular. Mr. Bright stood true to his principles under those circumstances, as he was found true to his principles and co-operating with the minister in the hour of victory. (Cheers.) Well; it is said that he has used strong language, and that occasionally he has not been very conciliatory to the monopolists. I dare say it is true. I do not think that in the discussion of the Free-trade question much conciliation was exhibited by Mr. Cobden, by Mr. Villiers, by Sir Robert Peel, or by Lord John Russell to the monopolists, any more than by the monopolists to them. But it is quite easy to get a reputation for being conciliatory. It is the easiest thing in the world; it is only agreeing with all men upon all subjects, if you like. You have only to pare down your opinions on all subjects so as to agree with the opinions of every man you may come across; you have only to dilute your principles so far that no person by the utmost ingenuity can discover the slightest resemblance to a principle in them; and then you are conciliatory. (Cheers.) Now, justice to Mr. Bright requires that he should never be confounded with that class of men. (Cheers.) Ay, he has made strong speeches, used strong language; but that language was spoken at a time when these districts were suffering under the greatest privation and distress. He saw the emigrant ships leaving your shores filled with men driven from this country; the best bones and sinews and muscles of the country driven away in consequence of the Corn Law; he saw the bankrupt list, that record of broken hearts and ruined families, increasing from week to week; he saw gaols overflowing, the criminal calendar increased and enlarged, the tables of mortality filled with starving victims from week to week; and he has felt and spoken as a man against the burning wrongs which were endured by the people of this district. And because he so spoke, and so acted, and so thought, and so fought your battles—not in holiday or drawing-room phraseology to suit the taste of the day—shall it be said that we, who partook of the victory, measured with hypocritical severity the temper of the weapon with which our battles were fought and our victories gained.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Absalom Watkin next moved:—

“That this meeting of the Liberal electors of the borough of Manchester, gratefully acknowledging the distinguished services of John Bright, Esq., M.P., in the recent struggle for commercial freedom, and entertaining a high sense of his talents and public conduct, resolves, that he is peculiarly qualified to represent this borough in Parliament, and pledges itself to take all requisite steps for securing his return.” The influence of Manchester should never be forgotten by her sons in the exercise of any public duty,” said Mr. Watkin. “It was in Manchester that the Corn Laws were denounced as unjust; and, under the guidance of Manchester, the injustice was exposed and overthrown. (Cheers.) This has been our first great triumph, but many others remain to be achieved; and it is essential to our success that we should be properly and efficiently represented. In the attainment of our first victory Mr. Bright was one of those who led the van. Side by side with Cobden and Villiers he fought the good fight, exposing injustice, disentangling sophistry, setting truth in the strongest light, and finally erecting the standard of Free-trade in the very citadel of monopoly. (Much cheering.) Gentlemen, it is necessary we should remember that even yet Free-trade has not been finally accomplished. Mr. Bright appears amongst us crowned with the laurels of his former victory. He does not come before us as a promising recruit, but as a tried and triumphant soldier. I know that it is objected to him that he was violent. They accuse him of having felt too keenly, and exposed too vehemently, a monstrous and impudent injustice. He refused to speak of the evils of monopoly, of the immolation of industry on the altar of avarice, and of the dreadful sufferings of the poor, in smooth language, ‘with taffeta phrases, and silken terms precise;’ and their notions of decorum were offended. Accustomed to sham fights, they expected a tournament, and they found a battle. It was no longer a fencing match, but a combat, a contest for life or death, and the vanquished naturally complain of the fury of the assault by which they were overthrown. (Loud cheers.) I believe the worst that was ever said of Mr. Bright by his bitterest opponents amounts to this: that he pursued a great object with the ardour of a deep conviction, and did not stay to bandy courtesies when he sought to hew down giant abuses. (Cheers.) Remember, as I have already told you, that Free-trade is not yet fully accomplished. Monopoly has not yet uttered its expiring cry. It is true, you have scotched the snake; it has received a deep, perhaps a deadly wound; its grasp is relaxed, but it still folds itself around your

trade, and even yet its venom pollutes your daily bread. (Cheers.) The great principle of unshackled commerce has yet to be fully established; and it is for such men as Mr. Bright to cause it to be extended from the princely merchant, who unites the four quarters of the earth by his operations, down to the poor struggling hawker, with his little basket of wares, who is now cruelly and shamefully taxed for endeavouring to obtain a living by honest industry." (Cheers.)

Mr. Alderman Bird seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously. *

"It was accident alone which first drew me from private life," said Mr. Bright. "I have no personal object whatever in being in Parliament; I have no personal interest to serve. (Hear, hear.) I believe that there is no office, no title, no honour whatever, which any government could offer to me, that would in any way influence the decision to which I should come on any question, or affect the vote that I should give; and on all those questions on which I have spoken I can declare with the most perfect honesty and sincerity, that the decision to which I have come, be it right or be it wrong, has been come to with an honest desire to do what was right. (Cheers.) . . . The public mind is occupied just now with the politics of Ireland; and it would not be befitting me, perhaps, to let this opportunity pass without making some observations on the condition of that country. I am not disposed to lay all the blame of the condition of Ireland on the Government of Great Britain. I believe that Ireland has been governed, as conquered countries mostly are, with a great ignorance of its inhabitants on the part of its rulers, and with great disregard of all the laws of justice which should guide the rulers of every country. (Cheers.) My opinion is that much of its evils arises from the prevailing antagonism which exists, and which has existed for generations back, between religious parties in that country (cheers); and I am convinced that one of two things must be done—that either the Protestant establishment, so called, in that country, must be given up (hear, hear, and cheers), or that, by some mode of public remuneration, the ministers of the Catholic Church must be placed on an equality with the ministers of the Established Church. (Cheers.) I need not say, after what I have said before, which of these two modes of settling religious disputes in that country would be most acceptable to me. That which would abolish the Protestant Church in Ireland, so far as it is a political organisation (Loud cheers)—that is the measure which I should recommend, and any steps in that direction shall have my cordial support. (Cheers.) I would give to Ireland, moreover, a system of electoral registration (hear, hear), which should be at least as perfect and as liberal as that which we possess. (Cheers.) And I would give it also such a description of franchise as should place it at least on a par with the electoral system of this country." (Cheers.)

Referring to foreign affairs, Mr. Bright continued:—

It has been known for years that there was a scramble for the sister of the Queen of Spain. Louis Philippe appears to have been most active, and his son has got her to wife. (Laughter.) But is Louis Philippe, think you, so foolish in his old age as to suppose that France and Spain can be ever united under one head, and ruled by one sceptre? Is he the only man in Europe not to know that there is a division between France and Spain a thousand times more impassable than the Pyrenees, which are their geographical division? Look at the proud, the stately, and the haughty Spaniard, and say whether you suppose that he can amalgamate with the volatile Frenchman? There is a difference in their national characteristics which makes it impossible that they should ever become one nation; and if there is one thing of which the Spanish people are more jealous than another, it is of foreign interference. In his extremity the Spaniard will ask for your help; but the moment you have granted it, and relieved him of his difficulty, he becomes more jealous, and hates you with a bitterer hatred than ever he did before. (Cheers.) Louis Philippe is said to be avaricious in his old age; the Infanta of Spain is said to have a very large fortune; and there are great reasons for believing that her fortune was more an object than any chance of obtaining the crown of Spain in any future year. Louis Philippe has as much as he can do to keep one throne for his family, without endeavouring to grasp at another. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I am not speaking as if I thought that we were going to

have a war with France about this. There will be no war. The people of this country have not been learning for the last 130 years a lesson that will tempt them to enter into another war of succession. Still we may have these menacing articles in the newspapers. The articles in the foreign newspapers will grow hotter and hotter, more and more bitter. Then you hear of great activity in our dockyards; and by-and-by the newspapers will say it is necessary that all the defences of the country should be placed in a state of complete repair. Then, when Parliament meets, the navy estimates will be passed by acclamation; nobody will inquire how much is asked for; and it is not impossible that ministers will come down, and, as they did last year, ask for an extramillion of money. (Hear, hear.) Did you ever know armies and navies to be increased, unless during a period of general war, like that previous to 1815, and a reduction to be made in them afterwards? In 1834 or 1835 there was great talk about the Russians landing in England, and we expected to have a hug from the Russian bear some fine morning. (Laughter and cheers.) Then an increase in the votes took place; additional sums were granted by Parliament; and of course the people were either burdened with additional taxes, or there was not that reduction of taxation which might otherwise have taken place. In 1840 there was a great cry that the Chartists were about to revolutionise the country: Government asked for 5,000 additional troops, and they were granted. We have them yet. (Loud cries of Hear, hear, and cheers.) We have taught also obedience to the laws; we have taught that it is infinitely better, by peaceful means, to work out a peaceful reform of abuses, than to have recourse to violence and insurrection. (Loud cheers.) And whilst one class have been insolently oppressing, and another, craven in spirit, have submitted tamely to the oppression, we roused our countrymen throughout the kingdom, we overthrew the wrong, and wrought a great deliverance for the industry of the British people. (Cheers.) It may be that I have no qualifications which should entitle me to ask for the suffrages of any of the electors of Manchester. I boast of no such qualifications. I said before that accident had made me a public man; that I had no desire to leave the occupation in which I was brought up; and I can say now that home and domestic claims have to me lost none of their relish. I can assure this meeting that there is scarcely any occupation in life which is a more chequered one, which has more trouble to balance its delights, more of suffering to compensate for its enjoyments, than that of an honest representative of the people. (Cheers.) But if this meeting, and after this meeting the still larger body of the electors whom you may be supposed to represent, should think me a fit person to speak in your name in the British House of Commons, I will not shrink from the heavy, the onerous duties which that appointment would impose upon me. (Loud cheering.) I cannot boast of blood and of ancestry. My ancestors were people who followed an honourable industry—(Hear, hear)—such as I myself should have preferred always to follow, such as you follow now, and such as your forefathers followed. My sympathies are naturally with the class with which I am connected (great cheering), and I would infinitely prefer to raise the class of which I am one than by any means whatever to creep above it or out of it. (Cheers.) If I am elected, I can only promise you a zeal which, I think, few can surpass me in for those great public questions with which I have been connected, and for those principles which I have espoused (enthusiastic applause), and it will be to me an ample compensation for any labour I may endure, for any obloquy I may meet with, for any suffering I may undergo, if, in years to come (if years to come should be granted me) I may be able to look back and reflect that I have done something for the furtherance of those great principles and objects with which the name of Manchester is so gloriously identified.” (Much cheering.)

The Conservatives tried to prevail upon Lord Lincoln, son of the Duke of Newcastle, to contest the election, but his lordship declined upon hearing the result of the canvass; consequently a Conservative candidate was not brought forward.

On the 29th of July, 1847, Mr. John Bright and the Right Hon. Thomas Milner Gibson were elected to represent the famous town of Manchester in the House of Commons. The ceremony was performed in St. Ann's Square, and, strange to

state, this was the first time that the election for this borough passed over without a contest. There were about 10,000 persons present. Mr. Elkanah Armitage, the mayor, presided.

Mr. Alderman Watkin nominated the Right Hon. Thomas Milner Gibson as a fit and proper person to represent the constituency in Parliament, and Mr. Alderman Walker seconded the motion.

Mr. George Wilson nominated Mr. John Bright for the same high office, and Mr. Absalom Watkin, in seconding the motion, remarked that Mr. Bright was invested at once with the weight and influence proportionate to the wealth, intelligence, and independence of that great constituency. Their choice lifted him to a distinguished place amongst the representatives of the people. Mr. Bright would enter the House of Commons, not fettered by pledges to particular measures which circumstances might render inexpedient or unwise, but bound by known principles, and guided by tried integrity; and he would be there on their behalf to do battle with the enemy for the public weal—to wage a war of extermination against all forms of bad government, and to advocate all measures of political and social improvement—

“With lips of fire to plead his country’s cause,
And claim for freeborn men impartial laws.”

Mr. John Bright rose amidst considerable cheering, but about 300 persons, who had assembled in close proximity to the hustings in front, began to hiss vehemently, and appeared determined to drown his utterances in their unseemly noise. Mr. Bright graciously acknowledged the attention of friends and foes, and observed :—

“There are points of difference—serious points of difference—between me and some of those to whom I now speak (hear, hear, and hisses), but the opinions I hold, I hold honestly and maintain fearlessly; and I do not think the worse of any man that he holds opinions different from mine. (Cheers and hisses.) I have seen many instances in which a very small number of men could disturb the harmony of a very large assembly; and although there are those here of the operative class who consider me as their enemy, I can tell them that I would much rather have their ill-will now because I advocated their interests, than their ill-will hereafter because I had betrayed them. I am blamed because I did not give my assent to a measure which was popular with a portion of the operatives; I am blamed because I opposed the Ten Hours Bill—(hisses)—because I did not consent that Parliament should close the manufactories of this country for two hours a day. Well, I may be wrong; but if I am wrong, I am wrong in ignorance and not in intention. I boldly stated my opinion; I have argued for it, spoke for it, voted for it, and am ready to maintain it (cheers and hisses), but henceforth we shall have an opportunity of seeing which is right—the advocates of the measure or its opponents. If it be successful I shall rejoice; if it be not, I shall be willing to help in its amendment.” (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

Such honesty of utterance as this could not fail to make itself felt through the covering of prejudice which had spread

itself round the hearts of the operatives, and even his opponents could not help admiring his frankness and manly conduct.

An important feature in Mr. John Bright's character reveals itself in contending for his own principles, whether popular or unpopular. What he thinks true he avows openly and unreservedly, though it may be unpleasant, and though it may bring on him public disfavour. He at least is not disposed to swim always with the stream, or to wear his opinion "on both sides, like a leather jerkin."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. BRIGHT'S PRIVATE LIFE.

His Second Marriage—Home Life—His Children—His Study—His Pets—Llandudno his favourite Resort—Death of his beloved Child—St. Tudno's Churchyard—Out-door Service.

A MAN of Mr. Bright's genial and social nature, who had felt so severely the loss of the sun of his domestic sphere—or, as he has recently expressed himself when speaking of the death of his young wife, when “the light and the sunshine of his house were extinguished”—was not likely soon to surmount his sorrow; but fortunately—

“There is no grief which time does not lessen and soften.”

Some years after, in the same town, Leamington, where his wife had sunk to rest, he had the pleasure of meeting with a lady in whom he found a suitable substitute for the dear departed one. This young lady was no other than Miss Margaret Elizabeth Leatham, daughter of Mr. William Leatham, of Heath House, the banker of Wakefield and other towns.

The marriage ceremony was performed according to the usual mode of the “Friends,” in their homely Meeting House, George Street, Wakefield, on the 10th of June, 1847. There was a large assembly of ladies and gentlemen to witness the marriage of such distinguished persons, and many of Mr. Bright's political friends formed the majority of the congregation. In accordance with the extreme simplicity and deliberation of this sect, the marriage party sat in silence as Mr. Bright rose, and taking the right hand of Miss Leatham, pronounced in a low but distinct voice the Friends' formula:—“Friends, I take my friend, Margaret Elizabeth Leatham, to be my wife, promising through Divine assistance to be unto her a loving and faithful husband until it shall please the Lord by death to separate us.” While still holding hands, Miss Leatham, in a low and tremulous voice, pronounced words of similar import as regarded Mr. Bright, promising to be “unto him a loving and faithful wife.” After this a space of some minutes occurred, when one of the congregation offered up prayer, the whole assembly standing. There was another period

of silence, which was broken by Mr. George Bennington who read the certificate or declaration. This was signed by the bride and bridegroom, by their relations, friends, and afterwards by a large number of the congregation. The wedding party consisted of the bride and bridegroom, Mrs. Leatham (mother of the bride), Mr. Jacob Bright, of Rochdale (father of the bridegroom); Mr. and Mrs. Leatham, Miss Priscilla Leatham, Miss Priscilla Bright, Mr. C. Albert Leatham, Miss Esther Bright, Mr. Edward A. Leatham, Mr. Jacob Bright, jun. (the present member for Manchester), Mrs. M. W. Barclay, Mr. Joseph Gurney Barclay, Miss J. M. Barclay, Miss Ann F. Barclay, Mr. J. Priestman, jun., and Miss Elizabeth Thornhill. The whole ceremony lasted about an hour. The congratulations of those present were hearty and sincere, and the union proved a happy one.

“Meantime a smiling offspring rises round,
And mingles both their graces.”

For on the 18th March, 1848, at 51, Wimpole Street, Marylebone, London, Mr. Bright was presented with a son and heir, to whom was given the name of John Albert. On the 30th September, 1849, at “One Ash,” a daughter was born, and named Mary Harriet; on the 12th August, 1851, a son—William Leatham; on the 1st March, 1854, a daughter—Anna Elizabeth; on the 27th May, 1856, a daughter—Margaret Sophia. On the 24th February, 1859, a son was born, named Leonard; and on the 23rd of April, 1863, a fourth son, who received the name of Philip, thus completing the number of seven children.

Mr. Bright is a gentleman of quiet domestic habits, and when at home, free from the harass of public duty, he would accompany Mrs. Bright in the carriage, or go for a stroll, and during the evening he would sit reading or conversing with her. He was relieved by Mrs. Bright of any anxiety on domestic matters, so that he could devote his whole attention to the patriotic work he had undertaken. No father could be more attached to his children, and it was to him true pleasure to be in their midst. His mind was of that happy cast which can unbend and recreate itself in the simple play of his offspring, and in his speeches touches of tenderness about children break out occasionally, as well as advice to the unruly who “make their sires stoop.” So he is

“In private amiable—in public great.”

In such amusements great minds have often found much relief, for it transports them back to the innocent days of child-

hood; thus their minds secure mental refreshment and escape serious thought. Agesilaus diverted his children and himself with riding on a stick; Scipio, for a change, picked up shells on a sea-shore; Dean Swift amused himself by driving his friends, the Sheridans, before him through all the rooms of the deanery; and thus we frequently find men taking pleasure in pursuits which appear entirely foreign to their usual habits and occupations. This seems to be the reason why our poets do not carry their poetry into life, and why such a discrepancy exists between their biography and their verses. Young, in private life, possessed nothing of the sombre character which appears in his poems.

The rambling speeches delivered in the House of Commons by some members must be somewhat irksome to the ears of more accomplished orators, and provocative of nodding, for what they want in depth they give in length. The idiosyncrasies of some are truly amusing; as Churchill says—

“Adepts in the speaking trade
Keep a cough by them ready made.”

Mr. Bright, in delivering his speeches, has none of the drawling mannerism of many of the speakers in the House of Commons, but marches right on in a free, fresh, direct current of remark, nothing equalling his straightforward plainness, and condensed expression. His diction is drawn from the pure wells of English undefiled. “The use of Scriptural imagery is a marked feature of his orations, and no imagery can be more appropriately employed to illustrate his views; for Mr. Bright, in all his grand efforts, rises far above the loaded, unwholesome atmosphere of party politics into the purer air and brighter skies of patriotism and philanthropy. We may differ about his means or measures, but no one can differ about his aims when he puts forth his strength to raise Ireland and India in the scale of civilisation, to mitigate the evils of war, or to promote the spread of toleration and Christian charity throughout the world.”

Mr. Bright's study, or library, is situated in the western part of his residence, and he repairs to the privacy of this room, when at home, to consider the subject of any approaching speech that he is called upon to deliver. When in such deep study it has been his habit, after being tired of the room, to stroll into the dining-room—which is opposite, and has a south view—and there resume his mental labour. No one enters this room, there being a tacit understanding amongst the members of his household that he should not be interrupted. He very carefully examines the

points upon which he is to express opinions, and deliberates long before coming to a conclusion. He examines the subject from all points of view, and after he has arrived at a final decision, he writes out the heads of the different thoughts, to recall the various views he intends to enumerate, and trusts to his command of language in the expressing of them. He is careful never to make a statement without assuring himself of its correctness, and never draws an inference from facts which he does not believe to be sound. He is most conscientious, and what he believes to be right he will maintain with the unflinching spirit of a martyr. Although he has a strong moral tone, it is mellowed and tempered largely by kindness. Hence follow the worth, weight, and importance of all his opinions; and this is the secret of his success as a statesman, and how it is that the opinions he has expressed have ultimately been found to be correct, and have been embodied in Acts of Parliament of constitutional utility. From an early date in his public career he has prepared only a few notes, even for his lengthened speeches; but the subject has been so thoroughly mastered, that he is able coolly and collectively to express his views clearly in his own rich and elastic language as he proceeds. At one of the great meetings in the Birmingham Town Hall a few years ago an incident occurred, which was watched by the vast multitude present with curious interest. As was his custom, Mr. Bright placed his notes on his hat, which early in his speech he overturned by a slight gesticulation. The notes were wafted below the platform and found their way to a crevice, where they could not then be recovered. The whole audience at once became more interested, for they knew that the power of the orator would undergo a severe test. He, however, merely smiled, and proceeded without hesitation, seeming to be less concerned than any one else about the event, which did not prevent him from delivering a powerful and eloquent speech.

A common vice of public men is that they appear in a two-fold character: one phase is seen at home, the other is acted before the public; but in John Bright, the statesman, the husband, the father, are all centred, and are but varied aspects of one pure, great, and harmonious life. In him there are no extremes. He is unostentatious, and no man was ever farther removed from vanity. He loves simplicity, and is gentle and affable to those about him. Many years ago a Christmas tree was prepared for the entertainment of Mr. Bright's children. At that time a few intimate friends were spending the Christ-

mas at "One Ash," and during the evening the servants of the household were called in by Mrs. Bright to inspect the tree and receive their Christmas presents. Mr. Bright, noticing the absence of an elderly person, named Ann Sladen, who had for many years been employed to assist the servants, enquired where "Ann" was. She was called, but declined to come, her excuse being that she was in her working attire. Whereupon Mr. Bright politely requested the company to retire for a short time, to allow Ann to inspect the tree and receive her gift, and the guests readily complied. Ann felt grateful for this kind consideration; and this is only one of the many benevolent acts done for the poor by Mr. Bright, who ever acts on the principle that "Happiness seems made to be shared."

Footmen in gaudy trappings and with pretentious grimace are never seen at "One Ash;" but "neat-handed Phillis," with simple mien and unaffected air, admits the visitor. In fact, the illustrious head of that establishment requires but little attention from his servants. The early training inculcated by his excellent mother has never been eradicated. She always impressed upon her children the duty of self-reliance and systematic arrangement, and so well has this early training been acted upon, that even up to the present time of his advanced life Mr. Bright packs up his own travelling requisites; and before his declining years commenced, he was in the habit of walking from his residence to the railway station, as any humble pedestrian does—although a carriage and pair awaited his bidding. Never during the busiest time of his public career has he employed any regular amanuensis.

Throughout Mr. Bright's life he has been fond of dogs, and as many as three or four are to be seen at his home. It may be remembered that during the Reform Bill debate in the House of Commons, Mr. Bright, in alluding to Messrs. Lowe and Horsman's opposition, said that they reminded him of a Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair that it was difficult to tell which was the head and which was the tail. The comparison was so true that it caused an outburst of hearty laughter in the House of Commons, and it became a traditional joke, but it was not generally known that the homely illustration was suggested by the appearance of the shaggy Tiff, whom he had left behind him at "One Ash." This Tiff, a Scotch terrier, was a great favourite of Mr. Bright's, and would scarcely allow any person to intrude upon the privacy of his master without receiving permission in unmistakeable language. Tiff in the course of time died, and, with other predecessors of the canine

race, was honoured with a burial-place in the garden, in the rear of the mansion.

Mr. Bright is a great admirer not only of dogs, but of the nobler animal, the steed. For many years his carriage had been drawn by a pair of chestnut horses, and so attached did he become to them, that at their death they were buried in a field at the back of the mansion.

Mr. Bright's home has attracted the citizen of the world. To Englishmen and Americans it is especially interesting, and strangers often visit Rochdale, when they learn that the distinguished Quaker has returned to "One Ash," so that they might have the opportunity of seeing him in his house. Though the picture possesses no strong features, it breathes a beautiful tranquillity, and suggests a comfortable home. The late Mr. Charles Sumner, one of the United States' greatest senators, visited him, and spent his last night in England at this mansion. These two eloquent men had corresponded with each other for years, and great was the joy with which they met each other. It has been a custom with the Americans for many years to commemorate by an oration annually "The Boston Massacre:" the encounter between the British troops and the populace of Boston, on the 5th of March, 1770, which resulted in the death of five of the inhabitants. The anniversary was ultimately changed from the 5th of March to the 4th of July, the anniversary of the National Independence. Mr. Charles Sumner was the chosen orator in 1845, and his subject was based chiefly on peace:—

"It was a very beautiful picture from Grecian history," said he, "that there was at least one spot—the small island of Delos—dedicated to the gods, and kept at all times sacred from war, where the citizens of all hostile countries met and united in a common worship. So let us dedicate our broad country. The temple of honour shall be surrounded by the temple of concord, so that the prince shall be entertained only through the portals of the latter; the horn of abundance shall overflow at its gates, and religion shall be the guide over its steps of flashing adamant; while within, justice, returned to the earth from her long exile in the skies, shall rear her serene and majestic front. And the future chiefs of the republic, destined to uphold the glories of a new era, unspotted by human blood, shall be 'the first in peace, and the first in the hearts of their countrymen.'"

The Duke of Connaught, passing through Rochdale with his regiment, called to see Mr. Bright. The present Lord Derby also visited Mr. Bright some years ago. Of other distinguished men who have sojourned at "One Ash," Mr. Cobden was the most frequent visitor, and many an important event in the political world emanated from their conversations during their strolls in this garden, or from their fireside deliberations;

but these men were playful as well as grave. Cobden, on the occasion of one of these visits on a summer's morning, was walking in the garden with Bright, who came up to the gardener, and said, "Ben, do you know who this is?" "It is Mr. Cobden," replied Ben Oldham, and thereupon Cobden took the gardener by the hand, and after a hearty shake, Oldham remarked, "Ah, Mr. Cobden, you are getting to look much older." "Yes," said Mr. Cobden, adding in a whisper, "and if you'll not say anything about my grey hairs I'll say nothing about yours." The three laughed merrily, and the two statesmen continued their walk light-hearted.

Mr. Bright never forgets an old friend, nor does he neglect the kind duties towards neighbour acquaintances. In cases of sickness his visits are constant if he is at home; in cases of death his sympathy with the bereaved is touching and affectionate; and in cases of poverty it sometimes takes the form of substantial assistance.

Llandudno has been one of Mr. Bright's favourite resorts for many years. Accidentally meeting Joseph and Charles Sturge at this marine town on one occasion, he remarked in conversation to them that Llandudno might be called "the Child of Birmingham." This expression no doubt rose from the fact that some enterprising Birmingham gentlemen were amongst the first to take advantage of the beauty of this place, and its capabilities as a first-rate sea-bathing resort, and who erected some houses in the Crescent there. Ever since then it has been largely patronised by Birmingham pleasure-seekers in the summer season. Mr. Bright was attracted to it by the softness of its air, the refreshing sea-breeze, the bracing mountain atmosphere, and its picturesque surroundings. These retired scenes must have been conducive to contemplation, and inspired him with many noble thoughts. From its fine promontory of stern grey rocks, "which shoulder the broken tide away," he has doubtless often witnessed the busy ships that shadow the sea, linking clime to clime, and land to land. For homeward-scudding ships can be descried steering their course to the Mersey, while outward-bound are leaving to cross the broad Atlantic, or "to realms beyond yon highway of the world." It is this commercial spirit of enterprise which has dotted the surface of the globe with our possessions; and few are the harbours of the whole circle of the world which are not visited by the ships of England.

"Where'er she drops her anchor,
The peasant's heart is glad;
Where'er she spreads her parting sails,
The peasant's heart is sad."

What a chain of reflections must have passed through such a mind while quietly viewing those busy far-off white sails "bending and bowing o'er the billows," and the sea curling softly on the shore. It must have been a matter of congratulation to reflect that in a great degree he had contributed to the prosperous free trade in which those vessels were engaged, and had taken a leading part in effecting the abolition of those Corn Laws which had been the chief cause of the want and concomitant misery of those times. The time was not long past when merchants had been known to throw their corn freights overboard in the ports, within sight of starving people, who were guarded from receiving it on the coast, lest heavy losses might be incurred, consequent upon the drop in the prices of corn, while the tariff had to be paid. Yet how many weary months had the crew of an East Indiaman been shut out from the sight of land, how many storms had they encountered, when the strong billows wrestle with the land, to bring home that pickle which the English land-proprietor swallows at a mouthful, not to satisfy but to promote hunger—that he may devour some production imported at equal cost from another hemisphere. Lives more valuable, perhaps, than his own, may have been sacrificed to pamper his appetite. Some fisherman's boat may have perished in the night storm, in sight of home, before that turbot was torn from the raging billows. From the snow-covered hunter of the north to the sun-burnt vintager of the south, all offered up to him the sacrifice of their toils and dangers, yet he in return wished to deprive even the poor of cheap bread, the common necessary of life. These unnatural laws crippled trade, and as soon as they were deservedly abolished, free trade and plenty took the place of taxation and want; and the scene from the Great Orm's Head became more animated by the homeward-bound vessels, with their streaming ensigns, and carols, and the parting sails, with their watch-bells which cheer the night, while the seaman's hymn floats by. For hours has he stood contemplating the finest prospect that ever met his view. The ocean and sky mingling in vast distance, over which the eye dilated with the consciousness of desolate and overpowering grandeur—the far promontory that broke upon the sea horizon, its gloom contrasted with the gay town that shone upon its side, and the fleet of fishing-smacks that bent upon their evening cruise under its protection—then the line of hills that rise beyond the wooded domain and the vale, while the eye is relieved at intervals by some glittering spire or ambitious mansion that breaks the sameness and the vastness of the view.

As the winter of 1864 approached, Mr. and Mrs. Bright and their family visited Llandudno. At that time one of his sons, a handsome fair-haired boy, nearly six years of age, named Leonard, who bore a strong resemblance to his father in features and—so far as it was developed—in intellect, was seized with scarlatina at Llandudno.

While strolling through the pretty churchyard of St. Tudno, which is situated on the slope of the Great Orm's Head, within the hearing of "the grand, majestic symphonies of the ocean," the child, noticing the beauty of the place, formed a strange notion, which he afterwards expressed by saying, "Oh, mamma! I should wish, when I am dead, to be buried here." Little did his parents think that his careless wish would so soon be fulfilled; for during the same visit to Llandudno he was taken ill, and on the 8th of November, 1864, his little bosom heaved not and the colour left his cheek, for his soul had passed to the God who gave it; and that night the little chamber where he lay was still.

The shock was a very severe one to his father and mother, and his wish as to his burial-place was respected and fulfilled. The vicar (the Rev. John Morgan) kindly gave permission for the interment to take place in St. Tudno's churchyard. The vicar has added, in a letter to the author: "I readily assented, and I have never forgotten Mr. Bright's expression of thanks, which I never looked for; but I cannot believe that anyone, under the circumstances, could be so heartless as to refuse." The funeral was simple in the extreme; and as it slowly and mournfully ascended the mountain path, the only sound which broke the stillness was the fitful cadence of the restless billows, and the bleating of a solitary lamb which had wandered from the rest of the flock. Silent was the service at the graveside, but it was none the less fervent and impressive; for the sorrowful countenances betokened the inward grief and spiritual inspiration—

"One good man's earnest prayer was the link 'twixt them and God."

While standing there in deep meditation, memory brought thronging back the pretty looks of the lifeless child that lay before them; the sound of his voice, which was still, repeated his words, recalled his gracious parts, the picture of his father's form and face; but, alas! his note of joy was hushed, for his vital spark had passed away from the earth.

A long time elapsed before the sorrow-stricken father recovered his usual spirits; but "sorrow ends not when it seemeth done,"

Mr. Bright's fellow-townsmen, at a public meeting soon after the death of his son, expressed sympathy with him in his deep bereavement. A white marble head-stone was raised to the child's memory, with the simple record: "In loving remembrance of Leonard Bright (son of John Bright, M.P., and Margaret Elizabeth, his wife), who died at Llandudno, November 8th, 1864. Aged nearly six years. 'And there shall be one fold and one shepherd.'" The affectionate parents often visit this hallowed spot, and linger silently with fond regard beside the little fresh grave. Strangers approach it with reverence, and frequently it is strewn over with fragrant blossoms, and the wan moonlight bathes in rest his monumental stone.

The vicar has kindly furnished this additional information:—"I have heard Mr. Bright, with a deep feeling of thankfulness, say that loving hands, in anticipation of his visiting God's Acre, where his little one's remains rest, have placed upon more than one occasion a wreath and chaplet of flowers upon the little grave."

On Sundays, in the summer-time, this small church is overcrowded by the inhabitants and visitors to Llandudno, and it is the practice of the vicar when this is the case to hold the service in the churchyard; a harmonium leads the singing, which is always responsive and hearty. Under the shade of a hawthorn bush he reads the beautiful service of the Church and expounds the Scriptures, to congregations sometimes numbering as many as 2,000 persons. The scene on such occasions is very interesting; for here, among the tombstones raised in affectionate remembrance of the dead, the living lift up their tuneful voices in prayers and hymns of praise.

"Till even the humblest churchyard flower knows
Something of God, and dreams of all that's left to know."

That simple passage of Scripture on that plain white marble tablet, which attracts the attention of most of the worshippers, is descriptive of the gathering—"And there shall be one fold and one shepherd"—for here all creeds join in these open-air services, and thus form one fold under one shepherd. What an eloquent sermon could be preached from such a text. The dead, old and young, that lie beneath the feet, typical of the blade and the bearded grain, might be dilated upon to show the uncertainty of human life. Still that little marble stone saith more than a thousand homilies. That fair-haired boy who reposes peacefully in the furrows of God's Acre was snatched from his toys, "as a cross nurse might do her wayward child." Before leaving his

home at Rochdale he placed in the hands of his father's gardener, William Thompson, a little home-made whip, with particular instructions that he should keep it until he returned. The whip was carefully hung up in the greenhouse, but the owner never returned; and it is still preserved in remembrance of "the young face, fair and ruddy," who was laid near—

"The pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave."

His ambition at this early age was to labour in a lowly sphere. One day he voluntarily assisted the parlour-maid to clean the silver spoons, but she, finding that they were receiving rather rough usage at his hands, warned him to be careful of them, remarking, "you will be more careful of your own when you become a man." He, childlike, replied that he would not have silver spoons, but a wooden one, for he intended to be a carter.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

STATE OF IRELAND.

Opposition to the Coercion Bill of 1847—Foresadowing Disestablishment of the Irish Church—Irish Distress—Presentation of an Address from the Irish of Manchester—Education in Ireland.

MR. BRIGHT, ever since he was a young man, had taken a deep interest in Ireland and its inhabitants, and had formed the opinion that some of the enactments by which it was governed were not only repugnant to sound policy, but an outrage alike upon religion and humanity. He knew that the majority of members in the House of Commons at that time regarded the ill-fated nation as troublesome and disagreeable; and though they turned with disgust from the mass of evidence before Parliament respecting its sufferings, yet they condescended to be entertained with well-written novels respecting its people, and found these pictures almost as true and more enticing: for its virtues, its follies, its miseries, and its crimes were romantic. Poor in other respects, it was rich in robberies, murders, secret assemblies, and sudden and terrible catastrophes. He sympathised with its great popular advocate, Daniel O'Connell, and willingly assisted him in trying to improve the condition of his countrymen. The deaths of thousands of persons which had been brought about by the potato famine, which had destroyed about £16,000,000 of food, increased Mr. Bright's anxiety, and he devoted much attention to the Government plans proposed by Lord John Russell for the relief of the distressed. The wretched state of the country had brought about crimes to an alarming degree, and Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary, on the 29th of November, 1847, introduced into the House of Commons a Coercion Bill, to be applied to only a portion of Ireland. Mr. Bright presented a petition, signed by 20,000 of the residents of Manchester, against the bill, and in his speech on the third reading of the measure, he expressed the opinion that it was impossible to give peace and prosperity to that country until they set in motion her industry, diffused capital, and established those gradations of rank and condition by which alone the whole social fabric could be held together.

"Patchwork legislation will not now succeed," added Mr. Bright; "speeches from the Lord Lieutenant—articles in the newspapers—lending to the landowners at three and a-half per cent. money raised by taxation from the traders of England, who have recently been paying eight per cent.—all will fail to revive the industry of Ireland. I will now state what, in my opinion, is the remedy, and I beg to ask the attention of the Government to it, because, though they may now think it an extreme one, I am convinced that the time will come when they will be compelled to adopt it. In the first place, it is their duty to bring in a Sale of Estates Bill, and make it easy for landowners who wish to dispose of their estates to do so. They should bring in a Bill to simplify the titles to land in Ireland. I understand that it is almost impossible to transfer an estate now, the difficulties in the way of a clear title being almost insurmountable. In the next place, they should diminish temporarily, if not permanently, all stamp duties which hinder the transfer of landed property, and they should pass a law by which the system of entailing estates should for the future be prevented. (Laughter.) I can assure hon. gentlemen who laugh at this, that at some not distant day this must be done, and not in Ireland only, but in England also. It is an absurd and monstrous system, for it binds, as it were, the living under the power of the dead. The principle on which the law should proceed is this: that the owner of property should be permitted to leave it to whomsoever he will, provided the individual is living when the will is made; but he should not be suffered, after he is dead, and buried, and forgotten, to speak and still to direct the channel through which the estate should pass. I shall be told that the law of entail in Ireland is the same as in England, and that in Scotland it is even more strict. I admit it; but the evil is great in England, and in Scotland it has become intolerable, and must soon be relaxed if not abolished. Perhaps I shall be told that the laws of entail and primogeniture are necessary for the maintenance of our aristocratic institutions; but if the evils of Ireland spring from this source, I say, perish your aristocratic institutions rather than that a whole nation should be in this terrible condition. If your aristocratic families would rear up their children in habits of business, and with some notions of duty and prudence, these mischievous arrangements would not be required, and they would retain in their possession estates at least as large as is compatible with the interests of the rest of the community. If the laws of entail and primogeniture are sound and just, why not apply them to personal property as well as to freehold? Imagine them in force in the middle classes of the community, and it will be seen at once that the unnatural system, if universal, would produce confusion; and confusion would necessitate its total abolition. I am thoroughly convinced that everything the Government or Parliament can do for Ireland will be unavailing, unless the foundation of the work be laid well and deep, by clearing away the fetters under which land is now held, so that it may become the possession of real owners, and be made instrumental to the employment and sustentation of the people. Hon. gentlemen opposite may fancy themselves interested in maintaining the present system; but there is surely no interest they can have in it which they will weigh against the safety and prosperity of Ireland? I speak as a representative from a county which suffers extremely from the condition of Ireland. Lancashire is periodically overrun by the pauperism of Ireland; for a year past it has suffered most seriously from the pestilence imported from Ireland; and many of the evils which in times past have been attributed to the extension of manufactures in that county have arisen from the enormous immigration of a suffering and pauperised people driven for sustenance from their own country."

A majority of 150 being in favour of the Bill—only fourteen were against it—it soon after became law.

Sir George Grey, in the Session of 1848, introduced a measure entitled the Crown and Government Security Bill. It sought the more effectual repression of seditious and treasonable proceedings, and aimed a blow at the Chartists, as well as Irish agitation. Mr. Bright contended that it was quite within the right of an Englishman or an Irishman to discuss what form of government he should choose to live under, and pointed out that Government attempts to

restrict the liberty of the subject should be accompanied with measures for the welfare and amelioration of the people.

In speaking on a measure introduced by Mr. Poulett Scrope, in 1848, that had reference to taxation in Ireland, Mr. Bright foreshadowed the necessity of the measure of disestablishment of the Irish Church, which was introduced by Mr. Gladstone twenty years after.

"The condition of Ireland requires two kinds of remedies—one political, the other social; and it is hard to tell where the one ends and the other begins," said Mr. Bright. "I will speak first of the political remedies. At present, there prevails throughout three-fourths of the Irish people a total unbelief in the honesty and integrity of the Government of this country. There may or may not be good grounds for all this ill-feeling; but that it exists, no man acquainted with Ireland will deny. The first step to be taken is to remove this feeling; and, to do this, some great measure or measures should be offered to the people of Ireland, which will act as a complete demonstration to them that bygones are to be bygones with regard to the administration of Irish affairs, and that henceforth new, generous, and equal principles of government are to be adopted. I have on a former occasion stated my opinions on one or two subjects, and I will venture again briefly to explain them to the House. Ireland has long been a country of jars and turmoil, and its jars have arisen chiefly from religious dissensions. In respect of matters of religion she has been governed in a manner totally unknown in England and Scotland. If Ireland has been rightly governed—if it has been wise and just to maintain the Protestant Church established there, you ought, in order to carry out your system, to establish Prelacy in Scotland, and Catholicism in England; though, if you were to attempt to do either the one or the other, it would not be a sham but a real insurrection that you would provoke. There must be equality between the great religious sects in Ireland—between Catholic and Protestant. It is impossible that this equality can be much longer denied. It is suspected that it is the intention of the Government to bring forward at no distant day, if they can catch the people of England napping, a proposition for paying the Roman Catholic priests of Ireland. On more than one ground I should object to any such scheme. In the first place, I believe the Government cannot, from any funds they possess, or from any they can obtain, place the Catholic priests on an equality with the ministers of the Protestant Church; and if they cannot do that in every respect, the thing is not worth attempting. They will, I think, find it infinitely more easy, and it will certainly be much more in accordance with political justice, and with the true interests of religion, to withdraw from Ireland the Church Establishment which now exists there, and to bring about the perfect equality which may be secured by taking away so much of the funds as are proved to be totally unnecessary for the wants of the population. I do not mean that you should withdraw from the Protestant Church every sixpence now in its possession; what I mean is, that you should separate it from the State, and appropriate all the funds of which it might justly be deprived to some grand national object, such as the support and extension of the system of education now established in Ireland; an appropriation of money which would, I am sure, produce in the minds of the people of Ireland an entire change of feeling with regard to the legislation of Parliament in relation to their country. With regard to the Parliamentary representation of Ireland, having recently spent seventy-three days in an examination of the subject, whilst serving as a member of the Dublin Election Committee, I assert most distinctly that the representation which exists at this moment is a fraud; and I believe it would be far better if there were no representation at all, because the people would not then be deluded by the idea that they had a representative Government to protect their interests. The number of taxes which the people have to pay, in order to secure either the municipal or Parliamentary franchise, is so great that it is utterly impossible for the constituencies to be maintained, and for public opinion—the honest, real opinion of intelligent classes in Ireland—to obtain any common or decent degree of representation in the Imperial Legislature. I feel quite confident that in the next Session of Parliament the questions of religious equality in Ireland and of Irish representation must receive a much more serious attention than they have obtained in any past Session,

I come now to those social questions which must also receive the attention of Parliament; for if they do not, the political remedies will, after all, be of very little permanent use. I advocate these political changes on the ground, not that they will feed the hungry or employ the idle, but that they will be as oil thrown upon the waters, and will induce the people no longer to feel themselves treated as a conquered race. It is agreed on all sides that the social remedies which are immediately possible to us, are those having reference to the mode in which the land of Ireland is owned, or held and cultivated—perhaps ‘not cultivated’ would be a more correct expression. The noble Lord at the head of the Government has alluded to parts of Ireland in which it is impossible that the land as at present held, or the rates which can be collected, can find relief or sustentation for the people. It is a notorious fact, that there are vast tracts of land in Ireland which, if left in the hands of nominal and bankrupt owners, will never to the end of time support the population which ought to live upon them. And it is on this ground that I must question the policy of measures for expending public money with a view to the cultivation and reclamation of these lands. The true solution of this matter is to get the lands out of the hands of men who are the nominal, and not the real, possessors. But Parliament maintains laws which act most injuriously in this particular. The law and practice of entails tends to keep the soil in large properties, and in the hands of those who cannot perform their duty to it. It will be said that entails exist in Scotland and in England. Yes; but this Session a law has passed, or is passing, to modify the system as it has heretofore existed in Scotland; and in England many of its evils have been partially overcome by the extraordinary, and, to some degree, the accidental extension of manufacturing industry among the people. In Ireland there are no such mitigations; a code of laws exists, under which it is impossible for the land and the people to be brought, as it were, together, and for industry to live in independence and comfort, instead of crawling to this House, as it does almost annually, to ask alms of the hard-working people of England. The law and practice of primogeniture is another evil of the same character. It is a law unnatural and unjust at all times; but in the present condition of Ireland it cannot much longer be endured. Were I called upon—and it is a bold figure of speech to mention such a thing—but were I called upon to treat this Irish question, I would establish, for a limited period at least, a special court in Ireland to adjudicate on all questions connected with the titles and transfers of landed property. This court should finally decide questions of title; it should prepare and enforce a simple and short form of conveyance, as short almost as that by which railway stock is transferred; and, without regard to the public revenue, I would abolish every farthing of expense which is now incurred in the duties on stamps, for the purpose of facilitating the distribution of land in Ireland, and of allowing the capital and industry of the people to work out its salvation. All this is possible; and, more than this, it is all necessary. Well, now, what is the real obstacle in our path? You have toiled at this Irish difficulty session after session, and some of you have grown almost from boyhood to greyheaded old men since it first met you in your legislative career, and yet there is not in ancient or modern history a picture so humiliating as that which Ireland presents to the world at this moment; and there is not an English gentleman who, if he crossed the Channel in the present autumn, and travelled in any foreign country, would not wish to escape from any conversation among foreigners in which the question of the condition of Ireland was mooted for a single moment. Let the House, if it can, regard Ireland as an English country. Let us think of the eight millions of people, and of the millions of them doomed to this intolerable suffering. Let us think of the half-million who, within two years past, have perished miserably in the work-houses, and on the highways, and in their hovels—more, far more, than ever fell by the sword in any war this country ever waged; let us think of the crop of nameless horrors which is even now growing up in Ireland, and whose disastrous fruit may be gathered in years and generations to come. Let us examine what are the laws and the principles under which alone God and nature have permitted that nations should become industrious and provident. I hope the House will pardon me if I have said a word that can offend any one. But I feel conscious of a personal humiliation when I consider the state of Ireland. I do not wish to puff nostrums of my own, though it may be thought I am opposed to much that exists in the present order of things; but whether it tended to advance democracy, or to uphold aristocracy, or any other system, I would wish to fling to the winds any prejudice I have entertained, and any principle that may be questioned, if I can thereby do one single thing to hasten by a single day the time when Ireland shall be equal to

England in that comfort and that independence which an industrious people may enjoy, if the Government under which they live is equal and just."

In the Session of 1849 the Government brought forward a measure for a rate of aid with respect to Irish distress. Mr. Bright, speaking on the third night in the debate on the subject, delivered a masterly speech, which was applauded by the members on both sides of the House of Commons.

"The prisons are crowded," said Mr. Bright, "the chapels deserted, society is disorganised and ruined; labour is useless, for capital is not to be had for its employment. The reports of the inspectors say that this catastrophe has only been hastened, and not originated, by the failure of the potato crop during the last four years, and that all men possessed of any intelligence must have foreseen what would ultimately happen. . . . Hon. gentlemen turn with triumph to neighbouring countries, and speak in glowing terms of our glorious constitution. It is true that abroad thrones and dynasties have been overturned, whilst in England peace has reigned undisturbed. But take all the lives that have been lost in the last twelve months in Europe amidst the convulsions that have occurred—take all the cessation of trade, the destruction of industry, all the crushing of hopes and hearts, and they will not compare for an instant with the agonies which have been endured by the population of Ireland under your glorious constitution. And there are those who now say that this is the ordering of Providence. I met an Irish gentleman the other night, and, speaking upon the subject, he said that he saw no remedy, but that it seemed as if the present state of things were the mode by which Providence intended to solve the question of Irish difficulties. But let us not lay these calamities at the door of Providence; it were sinful in us, of all men, to do so. God has blessed Ireland—and does still bless her—in position, in soil, in climate; He has not withdrawn His promises, nor are they unfulfilled; there is still the sunshine and the shower, still the seedtime and the harvest; and the affluent bosom of the earth yet offers sustenance for man. But man must do his part—we must do our part—we must retrace our steps—we must shun the blunders and, I would even say, the crimes of our past legislation. We must free the land; and then we shall discover, and not till then, that industry, hopeful and remunerated—industry, free and inviolate—is the only sure foundation on which can be reared the enduring edifice of union and of peace."

The Irish residents of Manchester and Salford, in January, 1850, were so pleased with Mr. Bright's advocacy of the claims of Ireland that they presented him with an address in the Corn Exchange, Manchester, in testimony of their high appreciation. Mr. Bright, in a speech which lasted an hour and a-half, said:—

"I hope that Lord John Russell may rise to the great work that is before him. He has an opportunity of doing more for this country than almost any other Minister in our time. He might, I believe, add the industry and affections of millions to the wealth and strength of this great empire. But if he should fail—if he should prove himself to be the agent of a timid and selfish oligarchy rather than the Prime Minister of the Crown and of the people—if he shall not dare to do these things which in my conscience I believe he knows to be necessary—even then we will not despair; for, as I said, there is growing up in England, and I hope in Ireland, a party so strong and numerous that by-and-by it will leave out only the pauperism at one end of the scale, and, it may be, the titled and the privileged at the other; it will include almost the whole people; it will urge upon Government—united as we shall be with the people of Ireland—these great questions which I have discussed to-night. If the aristocracy of the United Kingdom has heaped evils unnumbered upon Ireland, why, I ask, should not the intelligent and virtuous people of the United Kingdom make them restitution?—(cheers); and when I speak of that great and growing party throughout this country, I would say that in all their struggles—whatever they may yet undertake, whatever they may accomplish—they cannot do

a nobler or better thing than to consecrate the cause of their advancing liberties by glorious and fruitful labours for the regeneration of Ireland." (Cheers.)

Dr. Bowring introduced a Bill into the House of Commons in 1846 in favour of the abolition of flogging in the army, and Mr. Bright spoke and voted in favour of the measure, and he stated that in the manufacturing districts when a man had been through every kind of vice he became a soldier. There was a commercial spirit, he said, in England, and that the people found the means of a more profitable and honourable existence in the walks of trade and commerce than in the gaudy trappings offered them in the service of the State. The motion was lost by a majority of fifty-three.

In 1847 Lord John Russell introduced the Government scheme of Education, which proposed issuing grants of public money for the purpose of education, but the Bill dealt unjustly with Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. Mr. Bright, in his speech against the Bill, showed what had been done by the voluntary system in England, Scotland, and Wales, and stated that where the Church had educated one child, the Dissenters had educated from eight to ten.

"It is notorious," said Mr. Bright, "that, in all parts of England, charities never intended to be used for the promotion of particular religious opinions, but which are in the hands of the Established Church, are distributed with a view to bringing an increase of attendance to the National schools or the churches of the Establishment. I know numbers of these cases myself; and I know that a child who did not bow down to the Church, or who refused to go to a National school, would find himself placed under the ban of the clergyman. All the inducements to him, which you boast of, to rise in the world and gain an honourable station in society, would be merely as the idle wind that blows, and would be of no avail whatever to obtain for him an honourable place in life. If anything were wanted to show the effect of these Minutes, look at the triumph your propositions have excited among the members of the Established Church, and the clergy especially. Was there ever a good measure for Nonconformists proposed that was received with an exulting shout of gratulation by the hon. Baronet below me (Sir R. H. Inglis), by the Bishops, and by all the clergy of the kingdom? I am wrong, perhaps, as regards the hon. Baronet; he did not loudly exult, but he took the measure meekly, he took it very thankfully. . . . I think that in this year 1847 the time may be said to have come, when, although the members of the Established Church may not consider such scruples wise and prudent, the scruples which do exist and are conscientiously entertained by thousands and millions of our countrymen should be respected, and when the Government should pause before it holds out a great temptation to men to abandon their principles; and, in the event of their refusing to abandon them, offers an enormous advantage to the members of the Established Church. With respect to the Roman Catholics, the right hon. gentleman did not give a direct reply to the statement of the hon. Member for Finsbury on that part of the subject, when he read an extract from a speech of the noble Lord in 1839; and, as there has been some talk of the negotiations which have been going on with the Wesleyans during the last fortnight, I should be glad, if the right hon. Baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department should think it worth while to notice anything I say, to receive an answer to this question—Have the Privy Council communicated with the authorities and dignitaries of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to the appointment of inspectors of Roman Catholic schools, or have they not? If they have, then it follows of course that they must have had the intention, when these Minutes were laid upon the tables of both Houses of Parliament, to make grants to

Roman Catholic schools. That would be something noble, something great, something to be admired, in coming forward to offer this great boon to all classes of the people without favour or distinction. In this House I have often heard men taunt the Dissenters with bigotry in their conduct towards the Roman Catholic population ; but let it be said that those Dissenters have ever accorded and been willing to accord to their Roman Catholic brethren all and everything they sought and could conscientiously accept for themselves. Civil rights and privileges the Dissenters have been willing to grant to Catholics. Many of them who have had seats in this House since 1829 would never have found admittance here had it not been for the assistance they received in their struggle for civil liberty at the hands of the Dissenting body. My honest opinion is this, that when these Minutes were laid upon the table, the Government intended, and most wisely, to open these grants to all persons of all religious persuasions whatsoever. The Government had no idea that there would be a disturbance about these Minutes. They were drawn up by a very clever secretary, who, like other secretaries, is disposed to magnify the importance of his office ; and when drawn up they were, no doubt, submitted to the oversight of the bishops in the other House. The whole thing was comfortably concocted, and it was supposed the Dissenters would take it without asking any questions. But the moment the Wesleys evinced a disposition to join other Dissenters in resisting the measure, it was feared that the opposition might grow too formidable, and negotiations were entered into. Possibly the Government did not make the first overture in this negotiation ; but it often happens in these cases, as everybody knows, that there is some convenient friend to make the primary advance, and put the negotiation in train. At this time the Wesleys are supposed to be under the delusion that the Roman Catholics are to be excluded ; and if they are, I am reminded of what has been said by a well-known writer, that it is sometimes as pleasant to be cheated as to cheat. I am not now going to detain the House with any observations as to the construction of the Committee of the Privy Council, nor will I enter into particulars of the expenditure to be incurred, or of the bribes to be offered. This only I will remark, that I believe the last thing any reasonable man would do to elevate his fellow-man, is to make him a pensioner or recipient of the bounty of the Government. But the question is, whether the Nonconformists, forming so large a part of the population of this country, are to have their feelings and principles disregarded in the course of legislation you adopt—whether a new system of education is to be introduced in which you teach everybody's religion at everybody's expense ? The Nonconformists deny your right to do this : they will not receive your money. You offer them that which is of no value to them ; and the Church, less scrupulous, receives the gift. The consequence is that the schools of the Dissenters will stand at a great disadvantage as compared with the Church schools—the one class depending solely upon voluntary contributions, the other having certain bribes attached to it of provision for life, and for the maintenance of which the House is asked to vote at the expense of all. I will say nothing now of the wonderful statesmanship which has chosen this particular season to open an arena of strife, and throw down an apple of discord amongst us when there was an appearance of concord and unanimity. I am sorry it has come to this ; I am sorry, not because of the particular effect it may have upon this Government or that Government, but because I must ever regret to see discord and bitterness introduced upon religious subjects, and because I know that when once this strife begins, real interests, useful matters, are neglected ; and men separate and stray aside from paths which they might tread together to the advantage of their common country. I will now conclude ; and if I have been betrayed into some warmth of expression, let it be remembered that I am a member of the Nonconformist body. My forefathers languished in prison by the acts of that Church which you now ask me to aggrandise. Within two years places of worship of the sect to which I belong have been despoiled of their furniture to pay the salary of a minister of the Established Church ; and when I look back and see how that Church has been uniformly hostile to the progress of public liberty, it is impossible for me to withhold my protest against the outrage committed by the Government on the Nonconformist body for the sake of increasing the power of a political institution, which I believe is destined to fall before the growing Christianity and the extending freedom of the people."

The grant was ultimately agreed to.

CHAPTER XXIX.

LAND TAXATION, ETC.

The Supply of Cotton—The Protectionists—Manchester Chamber of Commerce and the growth of Cotton in India—Capital Punishment—Financial and Parliamentary Reform—The Peace Society.

At an early period of his public career Mr. Bright interested himself in the supply of cotton to the manufacturing districts. In 1847 cotton was very scarce, and hundreds of mills were working short time, or closed; and Mr. Bright succeeded in getting a committee appointed by the House of Commons to inquire into the whole question, and it reported that in all the districts of Madras and Bombay where cotton was cultivated, and generally over those agricultural regions, the people were in a condition of the most abject and degraded pauperism.

The Protectionists, in the session of 1849, contended that the agricultural classes were entitled to compensation and relief under the loss of the repealed protective duties. Mr. Disraeli brought before the House a resolution in favour of alleviating the difficulties of the landowners by throwing a portion of the rates then assessed upon their property into the general taxation of the country. Sir Charles Wood, in arguing against the resolution, pointed out that in many European countries a far greater proportion of taxation was borne by the land than in England.

"It appears to me," said Mr. Bright, in opposing the motion, "that it is a proposition intended to withdraw burdens to the amount of some £6,000,000 per annum from certain shoulders on which they are now saddled, and to impose them upon others—to relieve, in short, those who now carry them, by transferring them to those who hitherto have not borne them. The hon. gentleman's scheme of redistribution would probably reimpose £3,000,000 on those from whom he would take the present aggregate of £6,000,000, and apportion the other £3,000,000 to other classes of the community. Well; but the £3,000,000 that he would so withdraw from those who at present pay £6,000,000 would by no means represent the real proportion in which hon. gentlemen opposite desire to relieve the land from its present liabilities, or of the enhanced value which their scheme would practically confer upon the land generally. Assuming the whole aggregate of land in this kingdom capable of cultivation to be worth what it has been stated at by gentlemen opposite, the rise in the value of the fee-simple of an acre, consequent on the remission of three millions of taxation on that aggregate, would be equivalent to 2 per cent. per annum, or would increase the market value of the land by £60,000,000 sterling. An increased value of 2 per cent. would thus make £210,000,000 the increased value of the land, supposing it to be brought for sale into the market, or that the Legislature sanctioned such a proposition as that which is now before it. I, for one, do not think that these are times in which the Legislature could be brought to listen to any such

proposition. It is not likely, I trust, to meet with much favour from this House. . . . Let hon. gentlemen beware how they turn their attention to the question of the reimposition of the duties upon corn. If you do so, you are attempting that which, I believe, is as impossible as the repeal of any Act which has passed this House in former times. You might probably effect the repeal of the Reform Bill or the Catholic Emancipation Act in the same session as that in which you reimpose the duty upon corn. Take care what you are about. Hon. gentlemen fancy that there is a lull in the public mind—that events abroad have frightened people at home. Bear in mind that in all the European capitals a system is being established which will have a strange effect upon the minds of the people in this country, who are looking, and wisely looking, to great and permanent changes in the constitution of Parliament; and that whilst your conduct is encouraging such ideas, you are leading the farmers of England in the pursuit of that false and uncertain light which must land them hereafter in the midst of difficulties much greater than those which encompass them at present."

The motion was thrown out by a majority of 91.

Two years after he again brought forward a similar motion, but this time it was only rejected by the small majority of 13, although 513 members were present.

A meeting of the members of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was held on the 18th of January, 1850, for the purpose of taking into consideration whether any course was open whereby enlarged commercial intercourse with India could be promoted, and especially whether an increased supply of cotton could be obtained. The present Sir Thomas Bazley was in the chair. Mr. Bright, in the course of a lengthy speech, reminded those present that a Parliamentary Committee, of which he had been a member, had made inquiry on the subject, and that the Committee had taken the evidence of a great number of persons who had been many years in India, who had been collectors, and Government officers, and engineers—judges in the very district from where this cotton should come—and that their evidence, without any dispute whatever on the part of any one of them, went to show that there were abundant means, as regarded climate and soil and population, for the production of a large supply of cotton in that country. (Hear, hear.) "If," he continued, "we want further evidence we have it in this fact, that India appears to be the country from whence cotton originally came to the rest of the world. I come to the conclusion then that we may go upon these ascertained facts, that India can grow cotton, and that it is because there are some obstacles in the way, which are removable, that India does not supply us with cotton." In the month of June Mr. Bright presented a memorial to the Prime Minister, and a petition to the House of Commons, on behalf of the Chamber, praying for the appointment of a Royal Commission to proceed to India to inquire into the obstacles which prevented the increased growth of cotton in that country. Unfortunately the Government could not be

induced to consent to the appointment of the Commission, and heeded not the warnings of Mr. Bright.

The Manchester Chamber of Commerce, in November, 1850, sent Mr. A. Mackay, the author of "The Western World," to India, to make a minute investigation as their commissioner. A subscription of £2,000 was got up to defray the expenses. On November 7th, a few days before Mr. Mackay took his departure, the Chamber held a meeting, and Mr. Bright informed those present:—

"I have known Mr. Mackay some years; I have known him for a considerable time intimately. I have had many opportunities of knowing his opinions and character long before this question was ever thought of by me, and I am quite satisfied that he goes out under the sanction of this Chamber to represent the trade of this district; and that he will execute the duty confided to him with all that impartiality, truthfulness, and fidelity which we or any honest friend of the India Company would require and expect. Now I am bold to say that for myself I am prepared to follow out, and to recommend this Chamber to follow out to its ultimate results, this inquiry, to whatever it may lead. We are in this embarrassed position with regard to cotton. The last four years have proved to a demonstration that the industry of this district can never be secure while we are dependent upon one market for a supply. We know, also, that owing to the peculiar circumstances under which that supply is grown in America, we run a hazard more fearful than any that has heretofore menaced us. We know that India is a country fitted by its climate and soil—vast tracts of which are suitable for the production of what we require. We know that India in ancient times was almost another term for riches, so great was its productiveness. We know that by steam navigation, and other modes of transit, we are brought within some thirty-six days of India—a country that used to be some six months' distance from us. We have asked the Government to grant an inquiry into this great question, and it was the duty of the Government to do it. The Government refused. Well, then, we who are here represent three or four hundred firms of this district, representing spinners, manufacturers, and merchants of this district to a very large extent: and co-operated as we are to-day, I am happy to say, with gentlemen from Liverpool and Blackburn—I say we are taking a course which is consistent with the character of the Chamber and demanded by the circumstances which the Chamber was established to represent, in proceeding to send a commission to India for the purpose of bringing back a true and faithful narrative of the condition of that country." (Hear, hear, and applause.)

Unfortunately Mr. Mackay died on the 15th of April, 1851, but not before he had collected some valuable information. The influence of the climate of India was too much for a constitution not naturally robust, and he was compelled to terminate his labours sooner than he anticipated, and was returning home to England to regain his strength, quite hopeful of the future, and promising to return to India and complete the work, but he died on the passage home.

At the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, in January, 1854, Mr. Bright said the work published by the Chamber—the report of Mr. Mackay—was one calculated to show that, with regard to the district of Guzerat, from which the main portion of the cotton came, how true had been all they had said with regard to the influence and neglect of the Government in the cultivation of India. Until some emergency came

which pulled up the whole Indian administration and plunged the Government in the dangers which were ahead, he was not certain that they would get any attention paid to the question in Parliament; and twenty years hence, in all probability, those of them who were alive would find Indian affairs very much as Parliament left them in the year 1853.

Mr. Bright, as far back as the session of 1848, opposed capital punishment by supporting a Bill introduced by Mr. Ewart to totally repeal punishment of death. He argued that capital punishment did not convey the awful threats that many supposed it did to that condition of men by whom crimes of this grievous nature were committed. The present law, he contended, was uncertain, irregular, and unjust to a degree which could not be imputed to any other law on the statute-book; and he cited a number of cases in proof of this remark. He advocated such a law as existed in France, by which extenuating circumstances were allowed to prevent capital punishment. He asked if England was to be behind Tuscany, France (to a large extent), Belgium, America (in some of her states), and other countries, with regard to punishment by death. He was of opinion that if capital punishment was abolished, and a secondary punishment was substituted, it would have the effect of diminishing the shocking crime of murder. The Bill was thrown out by a majority of fifty-six. It was again introduced by Mr. Ewart in 1849, and Mr. Bright's chief argument in its favour was that under the existing law criminals often escaped, because juries, though feeling morally certain of their guilt, would not take the responsibility of sending them to the scaffold. The majority this time against the Bill amounted only to twenty-four, and in 1850 was further reduced to six.

When the Budget was introduced in 1848, Mr. Bright referred to the depressed state of trade, and said that surely it was not the time when the military expenditure should be increased for the purpose of meeting an imaginary enemy; and he thought that the proposed increase of taxes for such a purpose was as unjustifiable as it was oppressive. Mr. Cobden, in 1849, proposed, in the House of Commons, to reduce the public disbursements by ten millions; and he was supported by Mr. Bright, who contrasted the financial condition of England and America, stating that the United States, notwithstanding the increase of its population and sea-board, increased neither its army nor its navy, and that England maintained more troops in Canada than the whole standing army of the United States. Cobden's motion was lost, for the Reformers numbered only seventy-eight, whereas

their opponents had put in an appearance to the number of 275. The majority of the members of that House, then as now, could not be convinced of the fact that a nation, like an individual, must become rich or poor by the proportion its expenses bear to its means. Carefulness and industry alone beget riches, and wastefulness and extravagance are the necessary forerunners of ruin alike to communities and to individuals; hence economy, which gives neatness and comfort to the cottage, is necessary to the mansion, to the palace, and even to the nation.

The hon. member for Manchester is next found directing his attention to Financial and Parliamentary Reform. On the 29th January, 1850, a great meeting was held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, there being about 8,000 persons present. Amongst them there were a large number of merchants and manufacturers from the neighbouring towns, who, being in Manchester on the market day—the Tuesday on which the meeting was held—took advantage of the occasion, and attended to hear “the great advocates of Free-trade,” Messrs. Cobden and Bright, and to encourage them in the struggle for Financial and Parliamentary Reform which was about to commence. Many, no doubt, were brought to the meeting from the desire to be among the first to enrol themselves in the freehold land scheme of enfranchisement. Mr. Wilson presided. Mr. Bright, in opening his speech, pointed out that:—

“If there be one feature which more than another distinguishes the time in which we live, it occurs to me that it is this—the remarkable amount of discussion and determination which are now brought to bear on all great social and political questions affecting the condition of the country; and this meeting, upon which I am looking, I think is one proof of the fact which I am stating; for it is but one of a series of meetings which have been held in various parts of the country since the close of the last session of Parliament, at which great social and political questions have been discussed.” (Hear.)

This short extract gives an insight to the passing events of this period and the struggle that followed.

Sir Robert Peel, on the 29th of June, was thrown from his horse while riding on Constitution Hill, and died a few days afterwards from the effects of the injuries he received.

The “Peace Society” was founded when Mr. Bright was a child, and its main supporters were members of the “Society of Friends.” Some years ago Mr. Bright admitted that he had been greatly influenced on the subject of peace by his training in the principles of the religious body to which he belonged. Some of his most pathetic speeches have been delivered against the evils of war; and, in the words of the poet, he might well say:—

“I hate that drum’s discordant sound,
Parading round, and round, and round.”

To me it talks of ravaged plains,
 And burning towers, and ruined swains,
 And mangled limbs, and dying groans,
 And widows' tears, and orphans' moans,
 And all the miseries man bestows
 To swell the catalogue of human woes."

The first meeting at which he spoke on the subject was held in the Town Hall, at Birmingham, on the 27th of November, 1850. At this meeting a report of the Peace Conference at Frankfort was given. Mr. Lucy, the Mayor, who was also the High Sheriff, presided. The speakers were Mr. Joseph Sturge, the Rev. A. James, Professor Worms of Hamburg, Mr. Richard Cobden, and Mr. John Bright, who said:—

"Now we know that during the past year thousands of Englishmen (greater numbers by far than have ever been known before) have traversed the continent in every direction; that very large numbers of foreigners have during the past year visited us; and that, in fact, railways are themselves becoming a mighty machinery for putting down the war machinery. (Cheers.) If we cast our eyes in another direction, we find that weekly we have magnificent steamers crossing the Atlantic in some ten or twelve days, thereby opening up the great facilities for extending our intercourse with the citizens of the United States. We know, too, that next year cheap trips are to cross the Atlantic for the purpose of enabling the people of America to witness here (the Great Exhibition) the products of all the nations on the face of the earth. (Cheers.) We know such things as these are but the heralds of those promises which are certain to be fulfilled—promises handed down to us in that Book—(cheers)—but for which the world would be in darkness, but wherein we gather the cheering consolation that there shall be peace from one end of the earth to the other. (Immense cheering.) Cast your eyes back over the last thirty-five years. During the whole of that time we have had a profound peace, and have kept up war establishments notwithstanding, and have therefore gone on adding to our national debt until at length the amount of it has become so large that nobody can measure it, and nobody believes that it will ever be paid off. (Hear, hear.) Look at Ireland; you have there 40,000 men maintained out of the taxes, and another 10,000 also maintained out of the taxes in the shape of armed police. (Hear, hear, and cries of "Shame!") 50,000 men in Ireland armed to keep the peace, under a system where peace is impossible—in a country where for years the misgovernment was such that in Europe it found no parallel. In that unfortunate country you witness a landlord proprietary, all of whose inclinations and feelings were in direct hostility to the population where their estates were situate; and there the proprietors now are reduced to beggary and ruin—and paupers crawl up their staircases and halls. (Cheers.) I say that I have seen paupers crawling along those magnificent halls where in years past the lords and the gentry held their festivals. (Cheers.) It is to uphold such a system as this that this vast force has been kept up in Ireland." (Hear, hear.)

When Mr. Bright concluded the whole audience rose and greeted him with an enthusiastic burst of applause, which lasted several minutes.

In the course of this speech Mr. Bright, in alluding to the superstitious fear of war with France, remarked that the only authority upon which a British admiral anticipated war was an idle story told by the Bishop of Madagascar. Sir Thomas Hastings, of the Royal Navy, afterwards wrote to Mr. Bright for his authority for the statement, and the member for Manchester informed him that Mr. Cobden had given him

the information. Sir Thomas Hastings was so exasperated that he challenged Mr. Cobden to a duel. Mr. Cobden was much amused with the invitation, and, on the spur of the moment, replied by letter as follows :—

“If in my earlier days my admiration for the genius of Sheridan had not tempted me to witness the mimic exploits of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, I might have been at a loss to comprehend the meaning of your letter. Aided, however, by my recollections of that model duellist, I understand you to propose that we should lay down our pens and have a personal interview, not to talk over the matter in dispute, not ever to approach within speaking distance, but to take our stand at twelve paces apart with pistols in hand, and endeavour to blow out each other's brains. Now, I am satisfied without any such experiment, on my head at least, that half an ounce of lead propelled by less than a quarter of an ounce of powder is quite sufficient to shatter the human skull to atoms, and extinguish in a moment all powers of reason, all sense of justice, and every religious sentiment. But how such a process could satisfy me that I had acted unjustly towards you, or convince you of the contrary, is, I confess, quite beyond my comprehension. So soon as I had recovered from the fit of laughter into which, I must own, your challenge threw me, and after I had mastered the temptation I felt, to name for my second my much esteemed friend, Mr. Punch, I endeavoured to procure a copy of the report of the committee; and, having refreshed my memory by a perusal of your evidence, I will endeavour to state the facts of the case as between you and myself in such a way as shall admit of no further misapprehension.”

Mr. Cobden then explained in this letter that Mr. Bright had merely made a mistake by substituting the name of the French Bishop of Japan for that of the Bishop of Madagascar, and concluded in the following terms :—

“You must, like all public men, expect that your conduct will be freely canvassed; and your fate will be a luckier one than that of most of us if you do not find yourself often misapprehended, and sometimes misrepresented. If, unable to restrain the ebullition of an irascible temper, you must needs challenge a member of the Legislature to mortal combat merely because another member is reported to have made a mistake in a single word, in a speech of an hour's length, or because a reporter's pen may have slipped at a critical moment, then you have mistaken your vocation; and you would be consulting your own reputation and the interests of the country by retiring from the public service, and seeking security for your susceptible nerves within the inviolable precincts of your own domestic circle.”

Sir Thomas Hastings, after more mature deliberation, pursued the challenge no further.

Mr. Bright was present at a meeting in the Manchester Town Hall on an evening in December, 1850, when the manufacturers, merchants, and other gentlemen paid their respects to Mr. Abbott Lawrence, a minister plenipotentiary from the United States, and thus he spoke of America :—

“I can never forget that that nation has derived from their forefathers a legacy which they would do well to keep. Men from this country planted in that country seeds of liberty, and lit the fire of freedom which their descendants have kept up, and cherished until this day. I look back with reverence to those men of whom one of our own poets, recently removed from amongst us, spoke as :—

“The fathers of New England, who unbound,
In wild Columbia, Europe's double chain;”

For there they taught that a great nation can consist, can advance, can grow, can become strong, can consolidate itself permanently, with perfect equality in its political, and perfect freedom in its religious, institutions." (Cheers.)

Both Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden had long formed the opinion that the material prosperity of nations was dependent on their mutual peace and good-will; and in their speeches they had pointed out the stupidity of the doctrine that teaches the necessity for a balance of power in Europe—a view which our country had maintained at such ruinous expenditure that peace had become nearly as costly as war. The working of the Corn Laws in shutting us off from the supplies of foreign countries had still further directed their attention to the European question; and they would often picture in their speeches at public meetings the happy results which would flow from a sense of the community of interest which existed between different peoples gradually overspreading the public mind—a sense that, as it deepened, would make quarrels less likely and war less possible.

Nothing more repelled their fine and accurate common sense than the overwhelming panics at some approaching foreign invasion which periodically swept the country. They saw distinctly that these panics were—if not created, certainly fostered—by the governing classes of this country, whose interests were bound up with the maintenance of a large military organisation, and a correspondingly large taxation and expenditure; and they saw as distinctly that the interweaving of commercial relations, the exchange of mutual products of different countries, and the consequent intercourse and knowledge of each other would be a better and infinitely cheaper guarantee for peace than any number of standing armies. They showed by speeches and pamphlets how the war with America had cost us millions of money, burdening the industry of the people with a mortgage of debt beyond the power of any single generation to pay—the result being that America was never of so much value to England as after she had secured her independence—so that we had really been spending all this money in the endeavour to cut the throat of our own prosperity. The wars with France were capable of still less defence. The wealth and manhood of the nation had been poured out like water for the purpose of propping up or restoring to that country a dynasty which had been cast off by its own subjects, and staying the march of conquest by which Napoleon was astonishing the world. Yet so little did all our efforts avail—though a “heaven-born” minister ruled our Cabinet, and the ablest and most successful of generals commanded our armies—that before that great soldier, full of

years and worldly honours, descended to the grave, he had seen the throne of France filled by the heir of his mighty rival whose dream of ambition he had dispelled at Waterloo. With such flagrant failures of national policy before their eyes, they became convinced of the futility of war. Nor was there wanting an opportunity for uttering their opinions, nor an occasion on which they were demanded.

In the years following the abolition of the Corn Laws Mr. Cobden had several times introduced motions into the House of Commons which affirmed that a reduction of the national expenditure might be undertaken without damage to the safety or honour of the country; but he still more prominently avowed his peace principles in 1853, when a panic of French invasion was running through the leading articles of all the newspapers. Prince de Joinville had alarmed us by a pamphlet, and the Duke of Wellington, then old and infirm, had lent the influence of his name to strengthen the fears of the public. Of course it really meant more ships, more soldiers, more taxation, less popular power, less prosperity, and Bright and Cobden set their faces against it from the beginning. In 1853 Mr. Cobden published a pamphlet, entitled, "1793 and 1853," and occupying itself with a comparison of public opinion in those two years in relation to a war with France. It is addressed in the form of three letters to a clergyman, or minister, who had preached a sermon on the death of the Duke of Wellington, in which the struggle terminating in 1815 had been characterised as one in defence of the liberties of Europe. This fallacy Mr. Cobden undertook to expose, and did so in a series of the most masterly and cogent arguments. Rising naturally with the swell of the theme from the familiar expressions of the friendly teller into fervours of diction which even Burke has not excelled, he concluded with an appeal to his clerical correspondent, which may well be pondered. "Will you pardon me," he says, "if before I lay down my pen I so far presume upon your forbearance as to express a doubt whether the eagerness with which the topic of the Duke of Wellington's career was so generally selected for pulpit manifestations was calculated to enhance the influence of ministers of the Gospel, or promote the interests of Christianity itself. Your case and that of public men are very dissimilar. The mere politician may plead the excuse, if he yields to the excitement of the day, that he lives and moves and has his being in the popular temper of the times. Flung as he is in the mid-current of passing events, he must swim with the stream, or be left upon its banks, for few have the strength or

courage to breast the rising wave of public feeling. How different is your case. Set apart for the contemplation and promotion of eternal and unchanging principles of benevolence, peace, and charity, public opinion would not only tolerate but applaud your abstinence from all displays where martial enthusiasm and hostile passions are called into activity. But a far higher sanction than public opinion is to be found for such a course. When the Master whom you especially serve, and whose example and precepts are the sole credentials of your faith, mingled in the affairs of this life, it was not to join in the exaltation of military genius, or share in the warlike triumphs of nation over nation, but to preach 'Peace on earth and good-will to men.'

CHAPTER XXX.

HOME LEGISLATION.

The Creation of Catholic Bishops—Freehold Land Societies—Invitation to represent Rochdale in Parliament—Disraeli's Attempt to assist Landowners—Bright and Kossuth—The Militia Bill of 1852—Re-elected for Manchester in 1852.

ABOUT the close of the year 1850 the Roman Pontiff created a *furor* in England by arranging a new division of dioceses, that should be ruled by bishops taking their titles from English towns, and Dr. Wiseman was appointed Archbishop of Westminster. The Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, at once expressed his indignation in a letter, and bishops of the Established Church induced their clergy to forward remonstrances and oppose papal pretensions. The Pope's decision afforded an excellent theme for controversy. "Great contests followed, and much learned dust," and there is no doubt that many sighed "for a forty-parson power," so as to be able to annihilate their adversary. The Reformers of the manufacturing district gathered in large numbers to a meeting in the Albion Hotel, Manchester, on the 23rd of January, 1851, to hear Mr. Bright express his views on the subject.

"There has been an attempt to frighten the country out of its propriety," said Mr. Bright. "I believe the cockneys have been very much frightened—(laughter)—I mean the parochial mind of the various divisions in London. (Laughter.) But let us look at what has been the state of feeling in Lancashire and Yorkshire. (Applause.) Beginning with Hull, the most eastern of the large towns of this district—the most important and widely-circulated papers in that town have altogether repudiated the attempt to raise up a bigoted and fanatical cry against the free exercise of the Catholic religion in this country. Go to Leeds; a paper there of the largest influence and circulation has given no countenance to this attempt. (Hear, hear.) And I must say that of all the speeches that have been delivered upon this question, I think a speech delivered by Mr. Baines, the editor of that paper, at the meeting of the ministers and friends of the Baptist and Independent churches, was the most true to the point of any that I have read. (Applause.) Well, then cross the borders of Yorkshire, and come to Manchester. You have two papers here of large circulation, and, in their respective walks, no doubt of great influence; neither of them has given any countenance to this intolerant cry, and one of them has very boldly and resolutely opposed it. (Applause.) Go on to Liverpool, and you find the papers there, of chief circulation and of chief influence, have taken the same tone that has been taken by the papers of Manchester. Well, I am free to argue from this, and do argue from it, that all this attempt to distract the public mind—all this attempt to point the finger of scorn at millions of our fellow-countrymen that differ from us in religion—(applause)—that all this has failed amongst the three millions of the population of this kingdom we inhabit, the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire. (Loud applause.) I do not know how it is, but there is some fatality about two things that the people of this country have

been discussing for generations past—Corn and Catholics. (Laughter.) This time last year there was almost terror about corn. Some people down here were afraid that corn was going to be shut out, and the squires were making a great disturbance about, not the papal, but the corn aggression. It is about 500 years ago that there was a sort of Parliament—not I believe a very regular one—held at Kilkenny, where English interests very much preponderated. They passed what has been called the Statute of Kilkenny—a law by which they made it penal, in a high degree, for an Irishman's horse to graze upon an Englishman's land. (Laughter.) Now from that time to this there has hardly been a Session of Parliament when this question of Catholics has not been brought up; and old women of both sexes (laughter), in all parts of the country, have been frightening themselves to death about this papal aggression." (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

Lord John Russell, on the 7th of February, in pursuance of a notice he had given, moved in the House of Commons for leave to bring in a Bill "To prevent the assumption of Ecclesiastical Titles in respect of places in the United Kingdom." Mr. J. Bright on that occasion said:—

"Well, the Catholic religion triumphs, and the territorial system you adopted, and which is now breaking down by the dispersion of landed property under the Encumbered Estates Act—that territorial system oppressed the peasantry, and has so greatly impoverished them that annually for some years great numbers of them have been forced to exile themselves from Ireland. Lancashire and all the great towns and other districts where employment is to be had are now crowded with a population which, but for the Government of this country with regard to Ireland, would have been living comfortably and industriously and prosperously in their own land. (Cheers.) Well, this is a fitting retribution. I wish some one capable of such a work would write a history of the retributive justice which has overtaken this country in relation to its dealings with Catholic Ireland. Catholicism, we are told, is spreading, and I admit that it does appear to be spreading; but I believe those appearances arise from circumstances I have before referred to. Our legislation has borne fruit to Rome both in Ireland and England. (Hear, hear.) Let us inquire as to England. England shows symptoms of returning to Rome. But where are those symptoms? In the people or in the clergy? (Hear, hear.) Why, the noble lord's letter tells where it is. The noble lord has discovered that the great institutions which were supposed to be the bulwarks of Protestantism turn out to be a large manufactory of a national or home-made popery. (Cheers and laughter.) I do not mean to say that those who are retrograding are willing to recognise the supremacy of the Pope; but it is a fact that they do adopt the principles of the papal religion, such as a sacramental Church, the special powers of the priest, and the subjugation of the mind to priestly influence. It has had votes of money from Parliament to almost an unknown amount; and it has a revenue of millions of which the Parliamentary plummet has never sounded the depth. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Well, where now is this Church? In the year 1850, after an existence of three centuries, it has not only not saved the country from the Pope, but, according to the statement of the Prime Minister, it is deeply infected with popery itself. (Hear, hear.) Now, I ask you, if machinery in any other department had as totally failed in effecting the purposes for which it was established, would you not entirely get rid of it? This Church takes its origin from Henry VIII. It was fixed where it is by Elizabeth, she hating the Pope at Rome because she was herself a pope at home. (Laughter.) And it was to her imperious and tyrannical disposition more than anything else that we owe the fact that what she called the Reformed Church of England is not really reformed. (Hear, hear.) I do not blame this Church as being worse than any other Church. I say any other Church, under similar circumstances, would have brought about the same result. In the reign of James I. it urged the monarchy to tyranny and persecution. In the reign of Charles I. it did much to overturn the monarchy; for prelacy united with the Crown was so heavy that it sank the Crown. In the time of Charles II. Dissenters were prosecuted right and left, and almost all the members of the sect to which I belong were, I believe, at one time in prison. This went on to the time of the Toleration Act. I will neither legislate against the Catholics nor in support of the Establishment; and however much the noble lord may succeed in gratifying the passions or in satisfying the prejudices of his followers out of doors,

I see nothing but evil in the course he is pursuing; therefore I must withhold my consent from this mischievous Bill." (Cheers.)

The Bill was ultimately passed by a large majority, but was never enforced.

In the same Session Mr. Locke King succeeded in bringing in a Bill to extend the franchise in counties to £10 occupiers, and it was supported by Mr. Bright, who reminded Lord John Russell that he had admitted the class was entitled to the franchise, but had suggested constitutional reasons why a franchise suited for boroughs was not suited for counties. Mr. Bright thought the Bill might be discussed, in order to see whether it should not form a part of the proposed general measure. The Bill was thrown out by 299 to 83.

In Rochdale, as well as other towns, "Freehold Land Societies" were established about the close of 1850. The Rochdale Society having made its first purchase of land, a soir  e of the members and friends was held in the Public Hall, Rochdale, on the 31st of January, 1851, to commemorate the event. There were about 300 persons present, and Mr. James Tweedale, one of the trustees, occupied the chair. The members of the society numbered about 300, holding 348 shares, each member paying 3s. fortnightly. A plot of land was purchased, containing about 24 acres, situated on the southerly side of Goose Lane, and it was said that for farming and gardening purposes it was equal to any in the neighbourhood. It cost £10,000, and was divided into about 500 allotments. It was formerly the property of Mr. Joseph Mills. Mr. John Bright was the President of the "Rochdale Freehold Land Society, established September 14th, 1850. Enrolled pursuant to Act of Parliament." In the prospectus it was stated that "The great objects of this society are—to improve the social, promote the moral, and exalt the political condition of the community at large. The leading characteristic is to form a common fund by the united fortnightly contributions of the members, and by this accumulation to purchase large tracts of eligible building land, which, after being surveyed and divided into equal lots, may be retailed to members at the wholesale price, and used for the erection of dwellings by themselves, or let on building leases to others. It is further available as a secure investment for parties wishing to save small sums; as a depository for future requirements; a certain source of profit and remuneration for capital; and a stepping-stone to an honourable independence."

Mr. John Bright was present at the meeting, and in his speech further explained the objects of the society.

"They were called together," he remarked, "to congratulate each other upon the success of the Rochdale Freehold Land Society, and to tell each other that they had made a purchase of property by which they intended to enfranchise many a man in that town who previously never had any prospect of being enfranchised, and also to bring into connection with them gentlemen who would take a warm interest in the matter and endeavour to promote their success. The project was not a visionary one; they were not to expect large estates or to have land for nothing; but the society was intended to enable great numbers of persons of limited incomes from wages to possess themselves of a small portion of land sufficient to build a house upon, and it would at any rate produce 40s. a year rent, and there could be no doubt that the possession of such a portion of land would give them as clear a right to be upon the register of county voters as if they possessed a large quantity." (Cheers.)

The effect of this movement was that the greater portion of the land is now covered with residences, and the project succeeded until the alteration of the law made the qualification unnecessary. This part of the town now goes by the name of the "Freehold."

A meeting of the members of the Rochdale Reform Association, and other Liberal electors of Rochdale, was held in the Public Hall, on the 2nd of April, 1851. On the platform were most of the active and prominent members of the party. Mr. Wm. Chadwick was in the chair, and stated that information had been received from Mr. Sharman Crawford, the member for Rochdale, to the effect that at the next election it was not his intention to offer himself for re-election, as he wished to retire on account of ill-health. After expressing regret at the loss the borough sustained in losing the services of Mr. Crawford, it was decided to forward the following requisition to Mr. John Bright:—

"Our respected representative, Mr. W. S. Crawford, having intimated his desire to retire from Parliamentary duties at the next general election, we, the undersigned electors of the borough of Rochdale, beg to express to you our earnest desire to have the honour of being represented by you, our townsman, in the next House of Commons. We recollect with pleasure the many virtues by which your private walk amongst us has always been distinguished, and the lively interest you have ever manifested in everything calculated to subserve the interests of this locality. Your indefatigable and successful exertions to annihilate the obnoxious tax upon bread have entitled you to the gratitude of every true patriot and philanthropist, and will hand your name down to posterity as being one main instrument in securing so valuable a boon to the people. We have marked your persevering exertions for the promotion of commercial freedom and for the abolition of all monopolies, and your eloquent advocacy of civil and religious liberty. Conscious as we are that your career in public life has been in harmony with the principles of the great majority of the people of Rochdale, we trust you will afford us the gratification of marking our sense of your private worth, and our high appreciation of the valuable services you have rendered to the public, by permitting us to put you in nomination at the next election for the borough of Rochdale, that we may have the honour of returning you to Parliament as the representative of your native town."

As soon as Mr. Bright saw the report in the newspapers, and before he had received the requisition, he wrote the following

letter from London, on the 10th of April, to the Liberal committee:—

"I observe from the public papers that the Liberal electors of Rochdale have held a meeting, at which they have unanimously agreed to a resolution requesting me to become a candidate for the representation of that borough on the retirement of Mr. S. Crawford at the dissolution of the present Parliament, and I am informed that a requisition to me is now in course of signature to the same effect. I think it best to write to you, as chairman of the meeting, at this stage of the proceedings, that I may save you and my friends unnecessary trouble. You will readily believe that I am deeply sensible of the kindness evinced towards me by my townsmen, and that I regard this expression of their approbation of my public conduct, and of their confidence in my political integrity, as an ample reward for any sacrifices I have made, and for such services as I have been able to render during my public life. If I consulted my own ease, and perhaps my own interest, it would be difficult for me to decline the invitation thus tendered to me, but in the position I find myself it does not appear consistent with my public duty voluntarily to abandon the post which I now occupy. In the year 1847 I was elected one of the representatives of the borough of Manchester, and my return took place without a contest. I need not tell you that Manchester is one of the very foremost constituencies in the United Kingdom, not in numbers only but in political intelligence, and in the influences it exercises on public opinion. Like the constituency of Rochdale, it is untainted by corruption, and its character for independence and public virtue is of the highest order. By this great constituency I was elected without contest. My opinions were fully explained with regard to the course I intended to pursue; there was no disguise. I have no reason to suppose that, however I may have failed to do all that was expected of me, my conduct, as a whole, has been otherwise than acceptable to those whom I have undertaken to represent. I cannot, therefore, abandon the position to which I have been called, and in which I am conscious only of honest efforts to maintain and advance the great principles upon which I claimed and secured the confidence of the electors of Manchester."

The Liberals of Rochdale next selected Mr. Edward Miall, and he was successfully returned at the general election, 1852, by a majority of 154, in opposition to Captain A. Ramsay, a Conservative.

Mr. Disraeli brought forward a motion in the House of Commons, on the 11th of April, to the effect that in any relief to be granted by the omission or adjustment of taxation, due regard should be paid to the distressed condition of the owners and occupiers of land in the United Kingdom. Mr. Bright, in opposing the motion, remarked:—

"Now, let me ask if there is any class that passes so triumphantly through every commercial hurricane and disaster as the class of landed proprietors does? I see that the candidate at Aylesbury has stated, as a proof of the distressed condition of the landed proprietors, that money invested in land only returns $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. But that in itself is a proof of the security of the return from land, and that it is not subjected to the vicissitudes to which other property is liable. There are some in this House who could tell a different tale respecting investments of another character—investments, for instance, in the manufacture of iron during the last four years. They could tell of the extraordinary revulsion which has taken place in that time, consequent on the demand for iron for railway purposes having declined. I can speak of my own trade, although I cannot confirm the view taken of it by the noble Lord, the member for Colchester. Yet I can state that a very large portion of that trade during the last five years, when there were three failures in the American cotton crop—that during these years all the coarse departments of the trade have

been of the most unprofitable character. . . . Undoubtedly, however, at this moment the condition of the tenant-farmer is one which every man must regard with sympathy. I defy any one to say, looking to the course which I and my friends have pursued as Free-traders, in this House, that we have ever manifested any want of sympathy for any one class of the tax-payers of this country. At least there can be no denial of the assertion that we have always advocated diminished expenditure and diminished taxation; and that we have urged a diminution of taxation in that particular direction which would have alike affected all classes, inasmuch as our object has been to remove taxes from articles of general and universal consumption, where the farmer would have obviously benefited not less than the weaver. But the farmers are in an unfortunate position; they are the victims of a vicious system. That, however, is not our system. It is the system of hon. gentlemen opposite. They created it for their own purposes in 1815, and they maintained it for their own purposes up to 1846. They led the farmers to believe that there could be no path to prosperity but through the county members and the House of Commons. I for one should be very sorry to be connected with any trade or manufacture if I had no reliance but on the members for Manchester. I should be extremely sorry to entrust my interests either to the impartiality of political parties in this House, or to its intelligence on commercial subjects. The unfortunate position of those among the tenant-farmers who suffer most, consists in this—that they notoriously hold more land than they have capital to cultivate. Their case is precisely the same as that of many landowners, who own extents of land on which they cannot pay all that is due. All this is very sad. If landowners buy land only to obtain political influence, they are on the road to ruin. If a tenant-farmer takes more land than he can properly cultivate in reference to his capital, he is also on the road to ruin. . . . I have now stated, in detail, what I regard as the reasons why the proposition of the hon. gentleman (Mr. Disraeli) would be of no value if it were agreed to. It can only serve to delude—not the owners of the land, for they understand all these tricks—but the occupying farmers throughout the country. It will serve but to delude these men into a belief that the thing which is really intended as a measure to cement a party in Parliament, is intended to do something for their benefit. One great result of the alteration in our commercial system with regard to corn is, I hope, this—it has not come yet, but it is in process of coming about—that the farmers will no longer conceive themselves to be a class having special privileges, special rights, and special claims upon the House of Commons. They will now know that their only chance is precisely that chance which all the rest of the community enjoy—a good education for their children for the next generation; and for themselves their intelligence, such as they have, and their industry, such as they can employ. And I will add, especially, the more they make themselves independent of their landlords as respects the old retainer and chieftain theory, the more they enable themselves to make bargains with their landlords, just as they would with other persons with whom they do business, the sooner will they find themselves out of their present undoubted difficulties. And I believe in my conscience, that if you talk here for ever of agricultural distress, you will still find that there is no remedy which it is the power of Parliament to give. The only possible chance for the farmers is in the exercise of those virtues and those talents by which the rest of their countrymen thrive; and if they exercise their own energies, and cultivate the quality of self-reliance, I am convinced that this country, with the finest roads, with the best markets, and with a favourable climate, will be found to triumph not only in her manufactures, but also in her agriculture.”

The motion was defeated by a majority of thirteen.

Mr. Bright and Mr. Gibson next addressed their constituents in the Free-trade Hall, on the 16th of May; and so important were their utterances regarded at the time that representatives of the press from London and most of the chief towns were present in larger force than usual. Mr. George Wilson was in the chair, and the hall was crowded. Mr. Bright, on rising, was received with great cheering; and as soon as this had so far subsided as to allow the voice of any one to be heard from the

platform, the hon. member began, and in the course of his speech said:—

“Now one word more on our own position, not as connected with this constituency with regard to the election—for I tell you honestly that, notwithstanding that there is not a man in England that has a higher idea of the exalted position of any one who, at all worthy, should occupy the place of your representative—yet when I speak of a vote in Parliament I endeavour to shut out from my mind any idea of controlling influence down here or elsewhere. (Cheers.) I am most happy when I can to agree with you, but I think there is a higher, loftier, and purer standard for a representative than even the influence of those whom he may represent; and that standard is his own intelligent, conscientious convictions of duty on the question which is before him. (Great cheering.) Now we are called the ‘Manchester Party,’ and our policy is the ‘Manchester Policy,’ and this building, I suppose, is the ‘School-room of the Manchester School.’ (Cheers and laughter.) Now I do not repudiate that name at all. I think it is an honour to ourselves—an honour to you—that by your own intelligence, your sacrifices, your combination, your intrepidity, you have actually marked the impression of your mind and your convictions upon the policy of the greatest empire of the globe. (Great cheering.) We have principles, and we intend to stand by them. (“Hear, hear.”) Our principles are not rash—they are not unsound. We have no interest in public misfortune. Our industry thrives in peace. All that we have in the world depends upon the performance and success of whatever is valuable to the institutions of the country. I am not afraid of the future. We have not, as the chosen people of old had, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, to lead us through the wilderness of human passion and human error, but He who vouchsafed to have the cloud and the fire has not left us forsaken. We have a guide not less sure, a light not less clear. We have before us the great principles of justice and mercy which Christianity has taught us and the advantages of philosophy and experience have alike sanctioned. Let us trust these principles. Let us believe that they exist for ever unchangeably in the providence of God; and if we build our national policy upon them, we may rest assured that we shall do all that lies in our power to promote that which is good, and which the patriotic amongst Englishmen have in all ages panted for—the lasting happiness and prosperity of this great nation.” (Great cheering.)

Kossuth, the Hungarian philanthropist, visited Manchester on the 11th November, 1851, and in the evening of the same day a meeting was held in the Free-trade Hall in his honour.

“We are here especially to express our sympathy for a great and noble nation suffering from tyranny, from which this country happily has been for generations free,” said Mr. Bright, in moving the address to the distinguished stranger. “We are here to express our admiration for a most distinguished man, one of the most renowned defenders of liberty which our age and the world can boast of. (Cheers.) I look upon him on this platform, a wanderer and an exile though he be, as far more illustrious to our eyes, and far more dear to our hearts—(cheers)—than any crowned head amongst the monarchs of Continental Europe. (Cheers.) But there are men who say, ‘Why, what is the use of your sympathy if you have no regiments and no ships?’ Well, I shall take another line of argument, and ask you whether there be any force in opinion, in opinion acting upon the nation. (Cheers.) Why, let me ask you, where are you assembled? (Hear, hear.) Recollect when this hall was built—(cheers)—recollect by whom it was built—(cheers)—recollect that from this platform and this hall went forth the voices which generated opinion in England, which concentrated it, which gathered it little by little until it became a power before which huge majorities in both Houses of Parliament became impotent minorities—(cheers)—and the most august and powerful aristocracy of the world had to succumb—(cheers)—and finally, through that opinion in this country, we struck down for ever the most gigantic tyranny that was ever practised.” (Loud cheers.)

In 1852 Earl Aberdeen did not care to replace Lord Palmer-

ston in his old office as Foreign Secretary, but appointed him Home Secretary. Having been debarred from the pleasure of bullying despots, he worried the tyrants of the street—the cab-drivers. Deprived of the power of despatching admirals to bombard the capitals of the refractory sovereigns, he made a raid upon the smoky chimneys of the metropolis. But while his hand was full at the Home Office his heart was at the Foreign Office. The cloud that had been for many years gathering was fast overspreading the East, and the minister who had twice sent the British fleet to the entrance of the Hellespont fancied that he saw the time coming when that far-famed gate, like the Temple of Janus, shut in time of peace and opened in time of war, would have to be passed.

Mr. Bright, in discussing the Militia Bill in the House of Commons, on the 3rd of May, 1852, pointed out that to get the militia into their clothes would take as long as to get the soldiers to the coast. In his boyhood he heard a great deal of the reliance that would be placed on our “wooden walls,” and we had poets in any number to sing:—

“Britannia needs **no bulwark,**
No towers along the steep;
Her tread is on the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep.”

Our wooden walls and our navy were now for the moment forgotten, and the blundering, miserable, and undisciplined horde that would be got together by the Militia Bill was that upon which the people of England were told to rely in time of apprehension and imminent danger. Was it not a lamentable thing that although three or four thousand years had passed since those sculptured marbles were first wrought which were to be seen in the British Museum, at this very moment, after 800 years of Christianity in Europe, and most of that period in this country, we were engaged—and not engaged reluctantly, but many of us as though it were our sole hope and occupation—in precisely that state of things pourtrayed on those ancient monuments—armed men, horses, chariots, processions, armaments—battles, and captives; aye, and there were priests now who blessed banners like the Assyrians, and who offered up thanksgivings to God for slaughter. Mr. Bright might have quoted with effect:—

“Ye hypocrites, are these your pranks,
To murder men and give God thanks?
Desist for shame, and go no further,
For God receives not thanks for murder.”

Mr. Bright, like the rest of the members of the Society of Friends, has ever protested against needless wars, and regards the military as men who are born only to devour provisions and render no service to society.

Mr. Bright addressed a number of meetings in Manchester prior to the general election in July, 1852, when Mr. George Loch and Captain the Hon. Joseph Denman were brought out in opposition to him and his colleague. The nomination took place in St. Ann's Square, on the 7th of July. Mr. R. Barnes, the mayor, presided. Alderman Walker nominated the Right Hon. Thomas Milner Gibson. Sir E. Armitage was the seconder of this nomination. Mr. Mark Philips nominated Mr. John Bright, and Mr. George Wilson seconded it. Mr. Robert Gardener nominated Mr. George Loch. Mr. C. E. Cawley was the seconder. Mr. T. Creig nominated Captain the Hon. Joseph Denman. Mr. Stephen Heelis seconded the motion. Mr. John Bright informed the electors that he came before them unchanged from the time when he was first permitted to stand there—unchanged in his regard for commercial freedom, for Parliamentary reform, and for religious freedom. The Mayor declared that the show of hands was in favour of the Right Hon. Thomas Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright, and a storm of thrilling cheers followed the announcement. The day of election was the 8th July, and the Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson and Mr. John Bright were the successful candidates. The official return showed that 5,752 votes had been tendered for Mr. Gibson, 5,475 for Mr. John Bright, 4,360 for Mr. Loch, and 3,969 for Captain Denman.

A few weeks after, the Manchester Free Library was inaugurated, and Mr. Bright, Mr. Charles Dickens, Mr. W. M. Thackeray, Sir E. L. Bulwer Lytton, Mr. Charles Knight, and other eminent men were present. Mr. Bright, in his speech, recommended, to young men especially, the study of works of biography.

"Unfortunately," he said, "it is a class of reading which is probably accomplished less ably and satisfactorily, but still there are in this library scores, probably hundreds, of admirable works of biography which you may read with the greatest benefit, and I may say for myself that there is no description of reading from which I rise, as I can myself discover, more improved, than when I rise from the study of the biography of some great and good man." (Cheers.)

The first commercial society in Ireland rendered public testimony to the general feeling which Mr. Bright's career as a politician and his labours in the cause of Free-trade inspired throughout the community, by a banquet at Belfast, on 4th of October, 1852. About 250 gentlemen, comprising the most

respectable portion of the mercantile classes and of the gentry of the city, were present. Mr. William Grimshaw, D.L., J.P., officiated as chairman. Mr. Bright, in a lengthy speech, said:—

“I have been in your country on this occasion for about a month. I have mixed with all classes, and I have observed as much as any ordinary man could observe within the same time. I have read much about Ireland, and all leads me to say that this country is a sorrowful spectacle before the world, and that it is your duty, in this industrious town, to lead the way in the improvement of your native country.” (Cheers.)

The Irish appreciated Mr. Bright's sympathy and had confidence in his assistance, which raised the flickering light of hope in their minds.

Mr. Bright, on April 15th, in supporting the Bill which was in favour of admitting Jews to Parliament, said:—

“The House of Commons has decided in favour of this Bill. Does any hon gentleman deny it? If the House of Commons represents the country, the country is in favour of this Bill. There is another estate of this realm, the most dignified of all, represented in this House by the gentlemen who sit on that (the Ministerial) bench; that estate of the realm unites cordially with the House of Commons and with the people in this Bill. Fourteen times has this measure been carried by large majorities; repeatedly has it been sent to the other House, and each time has it been rejected, and on some occasions rejected in a manner which seemed to indicate contempt. Now, I ask the noble lord the member for the City of London if there is any remedy in the Constitution for this state of things? The noble lord has the opportunity of admitting the Jews by a resolution of this House—he had a precedent of the most conclusive kind in the case of Mr. Pease; and although the law officers were not clear upon the law on that occasion, still the House of Commons, having once established a precedent of that nature, any person wishing to sustain the power of this House, and of one great branch of the Legislature, would have done wisely to have maintained the precedent, and to have relied on it in this case. . . . Some gentlemen say, ‘How can you expect the House of Lords to pass this Bill, when there is no ferment in the country?’ I thought noblemen in that assembly were in an atmosphere so serene, that though disturbed occasionally by the contentions of prelates and the disputations of rival lawyers, they might be judged to be in that one place on the earth ‘where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.’ But we are told there is no ferment in the country. I have seen ferments in this country, and many others have. I do not much admire them. I would rather see the Houses of Legislature, whether the one or the other, taking these questions up in a broad, philosophic, generous spirit, and discussing and settling them in that spirit, than that they should wait until there is a ferment in the country approaching to confusion, and then surrender, upon terms that shall be humiliating to them, prejudices which, if given up in time, might have been forgotten in the gratitude and the applause of their countrymen. It is assumed, and properly and wisely, that you will get no ferment up about the Jew Bill. I have no objection to admit that the Jews, not being great in numbers, and not free from some disadvantage, consequent upon that prejudice so prevalent on the benches opposite, will give occasion to no ferment before which these benches will quail. (Oh, oh!) They will quail soon enough when there is a ferment. (Oh, oh!) If that is doubted, I refer you to the history of the last twenty-five years in proof of what I say. But I want no ferment. I want argument and sound principles of legislation to prevail within the Houses of Parliament, and not the fear of anything that may take place outside.”

CHAPTER XXXI.

PEACE AND WAR.

Suspicion against France—Dispute between the Greek and Latin Churches—The breaking out of the Crimean War—At a Peace Meeting—Mr. Bright's Constituents—Banquet at the Reform Club—A Scene in the House of Commons—Mr. Bright on War—His Letter to Mr. Absalom Watkin, of Manchester—At a Stormy Meeting of his Constituents—Powerful Speech in the House of Commons.

For many years the war party in this country kept up the cry that Louis Napoleon and his subjects were anxious to "efface Waterloo," and that he would invade our shores before a declaration of war of any kind was made; in fact, it was further urged that the French were enemies of "This precious stone set in the silver sea."

The proverbial pride and porcupine prejudices of England, which always bristle up with mere suspicion, would have been allayed at this time by a better acquaintance with the French people, and if between the two nations commercial transactions had been freer. As it was the peace party found it necessary to get up demonstrations to counteract the exciting influence, and a Conference was held at Manchester in the Corn Exchange, on the 27th of January, 1853. In the evening a meeting, presided over by Mr. George Wilson, was held in the Free Trade Hall. Mr. Bright, in reference to the fear of a French invasion, said:—

"We have had uneasiness, and unnecessary preparations for war; the tinder is abroad now, the train is laid; it wants but some accident to excite a spark to set off this in flames. Taxes imposed—some taxes not reduced—trade disturbed—no financial reforms in the coming session—no Reform Bill; and we are told by some of the writers of the Government, the only thing now to be looked at is the defenceless condition of the country—(laughter); and if war should arise—if war should spring out of these insane proceedings—language wholly fails me to describe the disastrous consequences that must ensue. I draw no picture of blood and crime, of battles by sea and land; they are common to every war, and nature shudders at the enormities of man; but I see before me a vast commerce collapsed, a mighty industry paralysed, and people impoverished and exhausted with ever-increasing burdens, and a gathering discontent. I see this now peaceful land torn with factions—our now tranquil population suffering and ferocious—everything good quenched, and everything evil stimulated and exalted. I see sown, as it were before my eyes, the seeds of internal convulsion and of rapid national decay; and in the mournful vision which must affect the sight of any man who looks forward to these events I behold this great nation, the prolific parent of half the future world, sunk into hopeless ruin, the victim of its own ignorance and credulity, and of the cowardice and the crimes of its rulers." (Enthusiastic cheers.)

Fortunately the panic blew over, but the credit was partly

due to the efforts of Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden, and their followers. Their arguments were forcible, and pacified the nation. Vulgar minds cannot comprehend the ideas of men of genius; they think them audacities or chimerical innovations; but they who contribute to the improvement of mankind belong to but a small part of those of the present time—they are the heritage of after-years. Honest and good men may labour in their world of realities in a circle of minute duration—be useful, industrious, and virtuous followers in a beaten track—content with what they see, and thinking the world precisely as it should be in every respect. They, however, are but the wheels of society, not the motive-power.

A meeting of the influential members of the Liberal party of Manchester and district was held on the 3rd of February, 1853, in the Manchester Town Hall, for the purpose of taking counsel prior to the meeting of Parliament. Mr. George Wilson was in the chair, and the Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson, Mr. Henry Ashworth, and Mr. John Bright addressed the meeting.

“We must never forget,” observed Mr. Bright, “that we are the representatives of industry, of numbers, of intelligence, and of wealth; that we go to Parliament opposed to many antiquated blunders—(laughter)—to many hoary abuses, to many selfish and mischievous privileges. We must not forget that everything that this society has gained since the Revolution of 1688, and especially everything that we have gained of late years, has been gained in the manly contest of the industrial and commercial classes against the aristocratic and privileged classes of this country. (Cheers.) There are great things yet to be done. The result of past exertions is most encouraging. There lies a wide field before us for future exertion and for future success; and when I am permitted to speak here or elsewhere without the walls of Parliament, I would speak always in favour of what I believe to be just, and what I believe to be profitable and advantageous to the people; and in the House of Commons I do not assume to mere Parliamentary displays, or to seek official honours and emoluments; I would rather aspire to be a faithful representative of this great constituency—to defend all its rights and interests—(hear, hear)—to secure, as far as possible, all the liberties we now possess, and to lay up, if it be possible, for our children, a still more glorious inheritance of freedom than our fathers were able to bequeath to us.” (Cheers.)

Although everything at this time promised the most unbroken tranquillity for an unlimited length of time, yet only a few months were to pass before England was to be involved in the bloodiest and most disastrous hostilities known since the battle of Waterloo.

As the end of the year 1853 approached, a dispute broke out between the Greek and Latin churches as to the exclusive possession of the holy places in Palestine. France was ultimately drawn into the quarrel, sympathising and allying herself with Turkey, while Russia opposed them. A mixed commission was formed to enquire into the dispute, and a decision was given in favour of the Greeks. The Turks, how-

ever, who have always shown a spirit of intolerance, were dissatisfied, and received the support of France.

Enervating sloth, profound ignorance, and treachery have been insurmountable barriers between this decaying realm of Turkey and civilisation. In great matters of policy, as well as in minor ones, the Porte has always insisted on its own way, however inconsistent with the views of its allies, and will bend to nothing but the influence of fear. In fact, they are a dark spot in the civilised world, and of the Turk it has been truly said "That the grass grew not where his horse had trod."

Another attempt was made to settle the dispute by a conference of representatives from Austria, England, France, and Prussia, and they met on the 31st of July at Vienna, and agreed to a Note. The Czar accepted the proposition, but afterwards the Sultan insisted upon modifications. The Czar remained firm, and refused to comply with the demands of Turkey. England and France, seeing every prospect of a rupture, each sent two men-of-war to cruise in the Dardanelles. These boats arrived on the 14th of September, and the Sultan, finding that he had also awakened the interest of England in his cause, declared war against Russia on the 5th of October, and the three powers were soon in battle array against Russia. Bright and Cobden, foreseeing the waste of treasure, and, above all, the sacrifice of precious lives, in defending that doomed State, set about using their influence to prevent such a calamity, for they knew by experience that the result would be all but fruitless. They tried to imbue the nation with a disgust at war, and inculcated the blessings of peace. They expressed a strong objection against an expedition to fight Russia, and they were surprised that English statesmen, with the lessons of history before their eyes, should have embraced such a rash alliance, which they characterised as self-delusions of statesmen, and showed how vainly the voice of the past may speak amid the loud appeals and temptations of the present. They well knew that in warfare glory and want went hand in hand, and that the splendid reviews of troops, with their bristling arms, as they left their native shores, would leave behind them women in lone despair and poverty. Lord Palmerston's foreign policy, however, had infatuated the nation, and a war fever, which had been fanned by some of his colleagues, amongst the number Lord John Russell, raged throughout the kingdom; so these two eminent statesmen "travelled with the multitude," and the solemn remonstrance of Bright and Cobden was overwhelmed by the usual enthusiasm for "England's honour and glory." Time, however, has shown that the teaching of these two humble

orators was like the voice of truth, which is powerful, and will prevail.

Lord Palmerston resigned office under the pretence of disapproving of the proposed Reform Bill, but the real cause was that he had his own ideas upon the Eastern Question, ideas cherished through his lifetime, and unless he could see some prospect of realising them, he resolved not to continue in office. His speedy return to his old post proved that he had succeeded in obtaining some kind of guarantee as to the future, and the entry of the allied fleet into the Black Sea, about three weeks later, in reply to the Sultan's request made just before Lord Palmerston's resignation, enables the student of contemporary politics to form a shrewd guess.

The day after the declaration of war Mr. Bright received an invitation to a preliminary meeting to be held at the Manchester Athenæum, to consider the propriety of holding a public meeting in Manchester to "denounce the conduct of Russia, and to encourage the British Government to protect their interests and preserve the integrity of Turkey." Mr. John Bright, in replying by letter, made the declaration:—

"I cannot conceive anything more unwise than to endeavour to excite public opinion to drive the Government into war with Russia in defence of Turkey. If such a war should be undertaken, I believe our children and posterity will judge us precisely as we now judge those who involved this country in war with the American colonies and with France, with this difference only, that we shall be held to be so much more guilty, inasmuch as having had the blunders and crimes of our forefathers to warn us and to guide us, we have wilfully shut our eyes to the lesson which their unfortunate policy has left us. Manchester, and the two millions of people in this district, I hope and believe, regard those men as their worst enemies, who by any act at this moment shall weaken the efforts of Lord Aberdeen to preserve the peace of Europe. If men would let their reason guide them rather than their feelings, I am sure the pressure of public influence would be for peace and not for war. War will not save Turkey if peace cannot save her; but war will brutalise our people, increase our taxes, destroy our industry, postpone the promised Parliamentary reform, it may be for many years. I cannot attend your meeting, but I venture to send you some of my views on this Eastern Question."

Notwithstanding this and other warnings, we were drifting into war with Russia.

A peace conference was held at Edinburgh on the 13th October, 1853, the Lord Provost presiding. At the evening meeting, held in the Music Hall, Mr. R. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Mr. Elihu Burritt, and others of the peace party were accompanied on the platform by Sir C. Napier. The gallant admiral's presence excited considerable interest and curiosity, inasmuch as it held forth the prospect of "a scene" to vary the monotony of the peace demonstrations, for the gallant admiral had declared, at a meeting previously held, that it was his intention to "beard the Peace Society in its den." Mr. E. Burritt

first addressed the meeting, and was followed by Mr. Cobden. Sir C. Napier next rose, and was received with applause. He said :—

“ It might be, perhaps, extraordinary that a naval officer and an admiral should come to address a peace meeting, as it was generally supposed, though very improperly, that naval and military men were always for war, always for large establishments, and that they had no idea beyond bloodshed. (Hear, hear.) That was a most erroneous notion. Nelson was not fond of bloodshed or war, as they would see by reading his private letters, in which he was always longing for peace. The Duke of Wellington was always a peace man after the wars were over—(laughter)—and he succeeded in preserving peace for many years. He could assure them that he was just as anxious as any one in that hall, but then they differed as to the means of obtaining and preserving peace. (Hear, hear.) He did not think the plan of Mr. Cobden was exactly the way to preserve peace in this country. It was just twelve years since he was lying in Besika Bay, on apparently the same peaceful terms with the French fleet as they knew, and yet, at that very time, while they were lying cheek by jowl, what was France doing but meditating the destruction of the fleet they were lying alongside of. (Cheers.) It was the remonstrances of the Peace Society that led a weak Government to diminish our fleet almost to nothing; but it was false economy, and it was soon found necessary to increase again both army and navy.”

Mr. Bright next rose, and said :—

“ Admiral Napier says that the hon. member for the West Riding, who can do everything, had persuaded a feeble Government to reduce the armaments of this country to ‘nothing.’ What is ‘nothing’ in the admiral’s estimation? Fifteen millions a-year! Was all that money thrown away? We have it in the estimates, we pay it out of the taxes—it is appropriated by Parliament, it sustains your dockyards, pays the wages of your men, and maintains your ships. Fifteen millions sterling paid in the very year when the admiral says that my hon. friend reduced the armaments of the country to nothing! But take the sums which we spent for the past year in warlike preparations—seventeen millions, and the interest on debt caused by war—twenty-eight millions sterling; and it amounts to £45,000,000. What are our whole exports? Even this year, far the largest year of exports we have ever known, they may amount to £80,000,000. Well, then, plant some one at the mouth of every port and harbour in the United Kingdom, and let him take every alternate ship that leaves your rivers and your harbours, with all its valuable cargo on board, and let him carry it off as tribute, and it will not amount to the cost that you pay every year for a war, that fifty years ago was justified as much as it is attempted to justify this impending war, and for the preparations which you now make after a peace which has lasted for thirty-eight years. Every twenty years—in a nation’s life nothing, in a person’s life something—every twenty years a thousand millions sterling out of the industry of the hard-working people of this United Kingdom are extorted, appropriated, and expended to pay for that unnecessary and unjust war, and for the absurd and ruinous expenditure which you now incur. A thousand millions every twenty years! Apply a thousand millions, not every twenty years, but for one period of twenty years, to objects of good in this country, and it would be rendered more like a paradise than anything that history records of man’s condition, and would make so great a change in these islands, that a man having seen them as they are now, and seeing them as they might then be, would not recognise them as the same country, nor our population as the same people. But what do we expend all this for? Bear in mind that admirals, and generals, and statesmen defended that great war, and that your newspapers, with scarcely an exception, were in favour of it, and denounced and ostracised hundreds of good men who dared, as we dare now, to denounce the spirit which would again lead this country into war. We went to war that France should not choose its own Government; the grand conclusion was that no Bonaparte should sit on the throne of France; yet France has all along been changing its Government from that time to this, and now we find ourselves with a Bonaparte on the throne of France, and, for anything I know to the contrary, likely to remain there a good while. So far, therefore, for the calculations of our forefathers, and for the results of that enormous

expenditure which they have saddled upon us. . . . If you want war, let it be for something that has at least the features of grandeur and of nobility about it, but not for the miserable, decrepit, moribund Government which is now enthroned, but which cannot last long, in the city of Constantinople. But Admiral Napier is alarmed lest, if Russia was possessed of Turkey, she would, somehow or other, embrace all Europe—that we all should be in the embrace of the Bear—and we know very well what that is. I believe that is all a vague and imaginary danger; and I am not for going to war for imaginary dangers. War is much too serious a matter. I recollect when France endeavoured to lay hold on Algeria, it was said that the Mediterranean was about to become a French lake. I do not believe that France is a bit more powerful in possessing it. It requires 100,000 French soldiers to maintain Algeria; and if a balance-sheet could be shown of what Algeria has cost France, and what France has gained from it, I believe you would have no difficulty whatever in discovering the reason why the French finances show a deficit, and why there is a rumour that another French loan is about to be created. But they tell us that if Russia gets to Constantinople, Englishmen will not be able to get to India by the overland journey. Mehemet Ali, even when Admiral Napier was battering down his towns, did not interfere with the carriage of our mails through his territory. We bring our overland mails at present partly through Austria, and partly through France, and the mails from Canada pass through the United States; and though I do not think there is the remotest possibility or probability of anything of the kind happening, yet I do not think that, in the event of war with these countries, we should have our mails stopped or our persons arrested in passing through these countries. At any rate, it would be a much more definite danger that would drive me to incur the ruin, guilt, and suffering of war. But they tell us, further, that the Emperor of Russia would get India. That is a still more remote contingency. If I were asked as to the probabilities of it, I should say that, judging from our past and present policy in Asia, we are more likely to invade Russia from India than Russia is to invade us in India. The policy we pursue in Asia is much more aggressive, aggrandising, and warlike than any that Russia has pursued or threatened during our time. But it is just possible that Russia may be more powerful by acquiring Turkey. I give the admiral the benefit of that admission. But I should like to ask whether, even if that be true, it is a sufficient reason for our going to war, and entering on what perhaps may be a long, ruinous, and sanguinary struggle, with a powerful empire like Russia? What is war? I believe that half the people that talk about war have not the slightest idea of what it is. In a short sentence it may be summed up to be the combination and concentration of all the horrors, atrocities, crimes, and sufferings of which human nature on this globe is capable. But what is even a rumour of war? Is there anybody here who has anything in the funds, or who is the owner of any railway stock, or anybody who has a large stock of raw material or manufactured goods? The funds have recently gone down 10 per cent. I do not say that the fall is all on account of this danger of war, but a great proportion of it undoubtedly is. A fall of 10 per cent. in the funds is nearly £80,000,000 sterling of value, and railway stock having gone down 20 per cent. makes a difference of £60,000,000 in the value of the railway property of this country. Add the two—£140,000,000—and take the diminished prosperity and value of manufactures of all kinds during the last few months, and you will understand the actual loss to the country now if you put it down at £200,000,000 sterling. But that is merely a rumour of war. That is war a long way off—the small cloud, no bigger than a man's hand—what will it be if it comes nearer and becomes a fact? And surely sane men ought to consider whether the case is a good one, the ground fair, the necessity clear, before they drag a nation of nearly 30,000,000 of people into a long and bloody struggle for a decrepit and tottering empire, which all the nations in Europe cannot long sustain. And, mind, war now would take a different aspect from what it did formerly. It is not only that you send out men who submit to be slaughtered, and that you pay a large amount of taxes—the amount of taxes would be but a feeble indication of what you would suffer. Our trade is now much more extensive than it was; our commerce is more expanded, our undertakings are more vast, and war will find you all out at home by withering up the resources of the prosperity enjoyed by the middle and working classes of the country. You would find that war in 1853 would be infinitely more perilous and destructive to our country than it has ever yet been at any former period of our history. There is another question which comes home to my mind with a gravity and seriousness which I can scarcely hope to communicate to you. You who lived during the period from 1815 to 1822 may remember that this country was probably never in a more

uneasy position. The sufferings of the working classes were beyond description, and the difficulties, and struggles, and bankruptcies of the middle classes were such as few persons have a just idea of. There was scarcely a year in which there was not an incipient insurrection in some parts of the country, arising from the sufferings which the working classes endured. You know very well that the Government of the day employed spies to create plots, and to get ignorant men to combine to take unlawful oaths; and you know that in the town of Stirling two men who, but for this diabolical agency, might have lived good and honest citizens, paid the penalty of their lives for their connection with unlawful combinations of this kind. Well, if you go into war now you will have more banners to decorate your cathedrals and churches. Englishmen will fight now as well as they ever did, and there is ample power to back them, if the country can be but sufficiently excited and deluded. You may raise up great generals. You may have another Wellington, and another Nelson too; for this country can grow men capable for every enterprise. Then there may be titles, and pensions, and marble monuments to eternise the men who have thus become great; but what becomes of you, and your country, and your children? For there is more than this in store. That seven years to which I have referred was a period dangerous to the existence of Government in this country, for the whole substratum, the whole foundations of society, were discontented, suffering intolerable evils, and hostile in the bitterest degree to the institutions and the Government of the country. Precisely the same things will come again. Rely on it, that injustice of any kind, be it bad laws, or be it a bloody, unjust, and unnecessary war, of necessity creates perils to every institution in the country. If the Corn-law had continued, if it had been impossible, by peaceful agitation, to abolish it, the monarchy itself would not have survived the ruin and disaster that it must have wrought. And if you go into a war now, with a doubled population, with a vast commerce, with extended credit, and a wider diffusion of partial education among the people, let there ever come a time like the period between 1815 and 1822, when the whole basis of society is upheaving with a sense of intolerable suffering, I ask you how many years' purchase would you give even for the venerable and mild monarchy under which you have the happiness to live? I confess when I think of the tremendous perils into which unthinking men—men who do not intend to fight themselves—are willing to drag or to hurry this country, I am amazed how they can trifle with interests so vast, and consequences so much beyond their calculation. But, speaking here in Edinburgh to such an audience—an audience probably for its numbers as intelligent and as influential as ever was assembled within the walls of any hall in this kingdom—I think I may put before you higher considerations even than those of property and the institutions of your country. I may remind you of duties more solemn, and of obligations more imperative. You profess to be a Christian nation. You make it your boast even—though boasting is somewhat out of place in such questions—you make it your boast that you are a Protestant people, and that you draw your rule of doctrine and practice, as from a well pure and undefiled, from the living oracles of God, and from the direct revelation of the Omnipotent. You have even conceived the magnificent project of illuminating the whole earth, even to its remotest and darkest recesses, by the dissemination of the volume of the New Testament, in whose every page are written for ever the words of peace. Within the limits of this island alone, on every Sabbath, 20,000, yes, far more than 20,000 temples are thrown open, in which devout men and women assemble that they may worship Him who is the 'Prince of Peace.' Is this a reality? or is your Christianity a romance? is your profession a dream? No, I am sure that your Christianity is not a romance, and I am equally sure that your profession is not a dream. It is because I believe this that I appeal to you with confidence, and that I have hope and faith in the future. I believe that we shall see, and at no very distant time, sound economic principles spreading much more widely amongst the people; a sense of justice growing up in a soil which hitherto has been deemed unfruitful; and, what will be better than all—the churches of the United Kingdom—the churches of Britain awaking, as it were, from their slumbers, and girding up their loins to more glorious work, when they shall not only accept and believe in the prophecy, but labour earnestly for its fulfilment, that there shall come a time—a blessed time—a time which shall last for ever—when 'nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.'" (Cheers.)

The resolution in favour of the object of the meeting was carried by an overwhelming number.

The majority of the newspapers poured forth a vast amount of invective and ridicule on Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden, contending that their peace principles were more likely to breed wars than prevent them. The plaudits which, but a few short years before, had followed in the wake of Mr. Bright wherever he went, were now changed into angry shouts against him, and a life which had been devoted in the cause of his country became embittered by reasonless ingratitude. Strange fate, to be an unpopular patriot and a suspected enemy; yet such was the destiny which he alternately encountered, and which in each event he met with the honest intrepidity of a man equally disdainful.

“A patriot's even course he steered,
Mid faction's wildest storms unmoved.”

No man was more bitterly assailed by the slanders of public men who administered to the bad passions of society, and by the horde that yelled in the country's ears the danger of the nation purely for the sake of the emoluments that they expected to win. But all these he despised. He knew that slander was not argument, and that obloquy and obscurity awaited the slanderers in the natural order of events. What he thought he dared to do; what he could advocate conscientiously from that he never flinched. He has no faith in the men who believe everything, subscribe to everything, and vote for everything. Often he has not been comprehended, because men out of the common level rarely are. He endeavoured to heal the dispute between England and Russia, and to pour balm where ministerial mismanagement had been insidiously lacerating.

An important meeting of Liberals was held at the “Albion” Hotel, Manchester, on the 24th of January, 1854, to confer on the subject of the Government Bill for the improvement of the representation of the people, and on other questions. Mr. G. Wilson presided, and the chief speakers were the Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson, Mr. R. Cobden, and John Bright.

“There is great excitement, and we know that,” observed Mr. Bright, “but notwithstanding that there is this excitement, we believe in our consciences the views we have laid before you are true; and doing so, what could be more contemptible than, with a view of aiding ourselves by getting upon the wave of temporary popularity, to add to the great crime which some men are committing in leading their country in a most pernicious and destructive course. We are not the war party, we are the peace party—(hear, hear)—but we claim to be not less patriotic than the noisiest of those reckless and clamorous advocates of war. (Hear, hear.) We shall be called unpatriotic. Why, I love my country as much as any one of them. I have as much interest in the country as any man can have, and the interest of what property he may have, of his wife, of his children, of his hopes, of his future. What we wish is that our country should adopt a high standard of national morality—(hear, hear, and cheers)—which

after all is the best result of the best statesmanship. (Renewed applause.) I want to see her power supported upon the virtues of her children. I would see her policy directed by honest and wise statesmen. Though I oppose this clamour, yet I can profoundly pray this country may ride secure in her majesty, greatness, and goodness, unharmed by the violence of faction and unimpaired by the storms of time." (Great cheers.)

All this time the Peace Society used their best exertions to prevent the war. They sent a deputation to the Czar, consisting of Mr. Henry Pease, of Darlington, Mr. Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, and Mr. Robert Charlton, of Bristol. These gentlemen arriving at St. Petersburg on the 10th of February, had an interview with the Emperor, who gave them a kind reception, and introduced them to the Empress. He declared to them that he was anxious to maintain cordial relations with England, and that it would not be his fault if it became his foe. He pressed them to prolong their stay and visit Moscow, and parted with them in a kindly spirit.

A meeting of the chairmen, vice-chairmen, and other members of Messrs. Gibson and Bright's election committee was held at the League rooms, Newall's Buildings, Manchester, on the 27th of February, for the purpose of considering the provisions of Lord John Russell's new Reform Bill, then before Parliament. Mr. John Bright expressed the opinion that it would be impossible throughout the kingdom to get any constituency whatever, or any popular meeting whatever, to pass resolutions in favour of the Bill:—

"And I declare honestly," he added, "that consistently with the fealty I owe to the Liberal electors of Manchester, and the Liberal party with whom I have been connected, I have no wish whatever to see that Bill passed into law; and if the minority scheme should be in it when we come to the third reading of the Bill, nothing whatever shall induce me to give my support to a measure involving a scheme which, I believe, is destructive of all sound principles of representation, and is calculated not to place us in a better position, but to hand us over bound more than we have been before to the territorial proprietors in this country." (Hear, hear.)

The Bill was withdrawn in April of the same year.

The Reform Club entertained Sir C. Napier at a banquet, who, in responding to the toast of his health, remarked, "I suppose we are very nearly at war, and probably when I get into the Baltic, I'll have an opportunity of declaring war." The First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir James Graham, was present; and he added, "My gallant friend says, when he goes into the Baltic he will declare war. I, as First Lord of the Admiralty, give him my free consent to do so." Lord Palmerston presided over this convivial gathering, at which levity and monstrous joy were displayed; and where "folly clapped her hands, and wisdom stared."

Mr. Bright, in the House of Commons, on the 13th of March, commented on the coarse after-dinner jokes of Sir Charles Napier and the First Lord of the Admiralty, by observing :—

"That he would say of Sir Charles Napier that his speech was the best at the dinner; that it was a speech that was not unbecoming the position in which he was placed. He would say nothing of the appointment further than this, that it appeared now to be a maxim of Government that a man did not come to maturity until he was seventy years of age. The language of Sir C. Napier was, 'I cannot say we are at war, because we are still at peace.' (Great laughter.) One would suppose there was nothing so funny as the whole matter on which those gentlemen were assembled. Sir Charles Napier went on to say, 'when I get into the Baltic I shall have the opportunity of declaring war.' (Cheers and laughter, and cries of 'Bravo, Charley.') It was in reference to that that the First Lord of the Admiralty said, 'My gallant friend says "when he gets into the Baltic he will declare war." I, as First Lord of the Admiralty, give him my free consent to do so.' (Loud cheers.) Now, suppose this had been said before Admiral Dundas entered the Black Sea, it would have been as proper to have said it then as now. They might be at war when Sir Charles Napier got into the Baltic; but could any one excuse the indiscretion of the right hon. viscount? The question he was going to ask the right hon. viscount, if the hon. member for Roscommon had not put it in other words, was simply this, whether the right hon. viscount had the sanction of the Cabinet for the language he used, and whether he spoke with the authority of his Sovereign. They were sending 25,000 men to the other side of Europe, and 25,000 British homes at this moment were filled with the deepest anxiety—fear which might be alternating with hope; and they knew that before the heat of summer was past they might have news from the swamps of the Danube—news of the indiscriminate slaughter of the battle-field—which might strike hundreds of people in this country dumb with agony and despair. He wanted to know, then, whether the jokes and stories of the noble lord were becoming at a time like this? He had read the proceedings of that banquet with pain and humiliation. The reckless levity that was displayed was, in his opinion, discreditable in the last degree to the great and responsible statesman of a civilised and Christian nation."

Lord Palmerston rose, and said :—

"If the hon. and *reverend* gentleman"—(laughter)

Mr. Cobden interrupted the noble lord by saying :—

"I rise to order. The noble lord I believe has made use of an epithet which is not justified by the rules of this House. I believe, sir, I shall not misinterpret him when I say that the epithet was flippant and undeserved."

Lord Palmerston, irritated, replied :—

"Well, we will not quarrel about words. I was going to say that the hon. gentleman has been pleased to advert to the circumstances of my being in the chair on the occasion referred to, and has been kind enough to express an opinion as to my conduct in the chair. I feel it right to inform the hon. gentleman that any opinion he may entertain of me is to me a matter of perfect indifference and contempt, and that I shall in no way be influenced by anything the hon. gentleman may say."

A man seldom surcharges a repartee with such belaboured bitterness when indifferent to such a reproof, and it was quite evident that Mr. Bright had thoroughly blunted the noble lord's wit, whose unseemly remarks and exhibition of temper were not countenanced by the members present.

Lord Macaulay was present, and the remarks made by Lord

Palmerston sank him in the estimation of the illustrious historian, who had for years regarded him as no mean statesman, and he thus expressed his opinions in a letter to a friend :—

“I went to the House on Monday, but for any pleasure I got I might as well have stayed away. I heard Bright say everything that I thought; and I heard Palmerston and Graham expose themselves lamentably. Palmerston's want of temper, judgment, and good breeding was almost incredible. He did himself more harm in three minutes than all his enemies and detractors throughout the world would have been able to do him in twenty years. I came home quite dispirited.”

The Prince Consort, in writing to his friend, Baron Stockmar, at this time, stated that the speeches of Napier and others at the dinner at the Reform Club, where Palmerston presided, “were scandalous and vulgar.”

There is no doubt that diet plays no mean part in the management of state affairs. If the gallant admiral's and the famous statesman's bellicose dispositions could have been averted by a due course of regimen, their bodies preserved in that condition in which they could best promote the welfare of the state committed to their charge, peccant humours purged away, bilious and melancholic vapours kept from “ascending,” as Falstaff has it, “to the brain,” the peace of Europe might have been left undisturbed, and millions of treasure been saved, as well as thousands of lives. Mr. Pitt uniformly prepared himself for great debates by eating highly seasoned beefsteaks, and we know into how many campaigns he plunged the country; but even he was disgusted with the gasconade and bravado displayed by General Wolfe in his presence before he left his native shores for the last time. Wolfe on that occasion, we are told, drew his sword; he rapped the table with it; he flourished it round the room; he talked of the mighty things which the sword was to achieve. The two ministers sat aghast at an exhibition so unusual from any man of real sense and real spirit. And when at last Wolfe had taken his leave, and his carriage was heard to roll from the door, Pitt seemed for a moment shaken in the high opinion which his deliberate judgment had formed of Wolfe; he lifted up his eyes and arms, and exclaimed to Lord Temple: “Good God! that I should have entrusted the fate of the country and of the administration to such hands.”

Upon the Royal Message to Parliament, on the 31st of March, announcing the commencement of the war, Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech :—

“With regard to trade, I can speak with some authority as to the state of things in Lancashire. The Russian trade is not only at an end, but it is made an offence

against the law to deal with any of our customers in Russia. The German trade is most injuriously affected by the uncertainty which prevails on the continent of Europe. The Levant trade, a very important branch, is almost extinguished in the present state of affairs in Greece, Turkey in Europe, and Syria. All property in trade is diminishing in value, whilst its burdens are increasing. The funds have fallen in value to the amount of about £120,000,000 sterling, and railway property is quoted at about £80,000,000 less than was the case a year ago. I do not pretend to ask the hon. member for Aylesbury (Mr. Layard) to put these losses, these great destructions of property, against the satisfaction he feels at the 'triumphant position' at which we have arrived. He may content himself with the dream that we are supporting the 'integrity and independence' of Turkey, though I doubt whether bringing three foreign armies on her soil, raising insurrections in her provinces, and hopelessly exhausting her finances, is a rational mode of maintaining her as an independent power. But we are sending out 30,000 troops to Turkey, and in that number are not included the men serving on board the fleets. Here are 30,000 lives! There is a thrill of horror sometimes when a single life is lost, and we sigh at the loss of a friend, or of a casual acquaintance! But here we are in danger of losing—and I give the opinions of military men, and not my own merely—10,000, or it may be 20,000 lives, that may be sacrificed in this struggle. I have never pretended to any sympathy for the military profession—but I have sympathy for my fellow-men and fellow-countrymen, wherever they may be. I have heard very melancholy accounts of the scenes which have been witnessed in the separations from families occasioned by this expedition to the East. But it will be said, and probably the noble lord the member for Tiverton will say, that it is a just war, a glorious war, and that I am full of morbid sentimentality, and have introduced topics not worthy to be mentioned in Parliament. But these are matters affecting the happiness of the homes of England, and we, who are the representatives and guardians of these homes, when the grand question of war is before us, should know at least that we have a case—that success is probable—and that an object is attainable which may be commensurate with the cost of war. There is another point which gives me some anxiety. You are boasting of an alliance with France. Alliances are dangerous things. It is an alliance with Turkey that has drawn us into this war. I would not advise alliances with any nation, but I would cultivate friendship with all nations. I would have no alliance that might drag us into measures which it is neither our duty nor our interest to undertake. By our present alliance with Turkey, Turkey cannot make peace without the consent of England and France; and by this boasted alliance with France, we may find ourselves involved in great difficulties at some future period of these transactions. I have endeavoured to look at the whole of this question, and I declare, after studying the correspondence which has been laid on the table—knowing what I know of Russia and of Turkey—seeing what I see of Austria and of Prussia—feeling the enormous perils to which this country is now exposed, I am amazed at the course which the Government have pursued, and I am horrified at the results to which their policy must inevitably tend. I do not say this in any spirit of hostility to the Government. I have never been hostile to them. I have once or twice felt it my duty to speak, with some degree of sharpness, of particular members of the Administration, but I suspect that in private they would admit that my censure was merited. But I have never entertained a party hostility to the Government. I know something of the difficulties they have had to encounter, and I have no doubt that, in taking office, they acted in as patriotic a spirit as is generally expected from members of this House. So long as their course was one which I could support, or even excuse, they have had my support. But this is not an ordinary question; it is not a question of reforming the University of Oxford, or of abolishing 'ministers' money' in Ireland; the matter now before us affects the character, the policy, and the vital interests of the empire; and when I think the Government have committed a grievous—it may be a fatal—error I am bound to tell them so. . . . I am told, indeed, that the war is popular, and that it is foolish and eccentric to oppose it. I doubt if the war is very popular in this House. But as to what is or has been popular, I may ask, what was more popular than the American war? There were persons lately living in Manchester who had seen the recruiting party going through the principal streets of that city, accompanied by the parochial clergy in full canonicals, exhorting the people to enlist and put down the rebels in the American colonies. Where is now the popularity of that disastrous and disgraceful war, and who is the man to defend it? But if hon. members will turn to the correspondence between George III. and Lord

North on the subject of that war, they will find that the king's chief argument for continuing the war, was that it would be dishonourable in him to make peace so long as the war was popular with the people. Again, what war could be more popular than the French war? Has not the noble lord (Lord John Russell) said, not long ago, in this House, that peace was rendered difficult, if not impossible, by the conduct of the English press in 1803? For myself, I do not trouble myself whether my conduct in Parliament is popular or not. I care only that it shall be wise and just as regards the permanent interests of my country, and I despise from the bottom of my heart the man who speaks a word in favour of this war, or of any war which he believes might have been avoided, merely because the press and a portion of the people urge the Government to carry it on. I recollect a passage of a distinguished French writer and statesman, which bears strongly upon our present position. He says, 'The country which can comprehend and act upon the lessons which God has given it in the past events of its history is secure in the most imminent crises of its fate.' The past events of our history have taught me that the intervention of this country in European wars is not only unnecessary, but calamitous; that we have rarely come out of such intervention having succeeded in the objects we fought for; that a debt of £800,000,000 sterling has been incurred by the policy which the noble lord approves, apparently for no other reason than that it dates from the time of William III.; and that, not debt alone has been incurred, but that we have left Europe at least as much in chains as before a single effort was made by us to rescue her from tyranny. I believe if this country, seventy years ago, had adopted the principle of non-intervention in every case where her interests were not directly and obviously assailed, she would have been saved from much of the pauperism and brutal crimes by which our Government and people have alike been disgraced. This country might have been a garden, every dwelling might have been of marble, and every person who treads its soil might have been sufficiently educated. We should, indeed, have had less of military glory. We might have had neither Trafalgar nor Waterloo; but we should have set a high example of a Christian nation, free in its institutions, courteous and just in its conduct towards all foreign states, and resting its policy on the unchangeable foundation of Christian morality." (Cheers.)

As soon as the war was declared, British industry received a check. Russia at once commenced to neglect agriculture, and the French peasant was called to leave his fields to enlist. The English artisan experienced the dire misfortune of witnessing his handicraft decline, and many were induced to join the army to be slaughtered in defence of a treacherous ally. Instead of taxation being reduced as was expected in the previous year, the income-tax had to be doubled, and the spirit duty and the malt-tax increased.

Mr. Absalom Watkin, of Manchester, having invited Mr. Bright to a meeting for the Patriotic Fund, and having stated that in his opinion the war was justified by the authority of *Vattel*, Mr. Bright replied by letter when on a visit to Rhyl, North Wales, on the 29th of October, 1854.

"With regard to the war itself," he wrote, "I am not surprised at the difference between your opinion and mine, if you decide a question of this nature by an appeal to *Vattel*. The 'law of nations' is not my law, and at best it is a code full of confusion and contradictions, having its foundation on custom and not on a higher morality, and on custom which has always been determined by the will of the strongest. It may be a question of some interest whether the first crusade was in accordance with the law and principles of *Vattel*; but whether the first crusade was just, and whether the policy of the crusades was a wise policy, is a totally different question. . . . The question of this present war is in two parts—first, was it

necessary for us to interfere by arms in a dispute between the Russians and the Turks; and, secondly, having determined to interfere, under certain circumstances, why was not the whole question terminated when Russia accepted the Vienna note? The seat of war is 3,000 miles away from us. We had not been attacked—not even insulted in any way. Two independent Governments had a dispute, and we thrust ourselves into the quarrel. That there was some ground for the dispute is admitted by the four Powers in the proposition of the Vienna note. But for the English Minister at Constantinople, and the Cabinet at home, the dispute would have settled itself, and the last note of Prince Menschikoff would have been accepted, and no human being can point out any material difference between that note and the Vienna note, afterwards agreed upon and recommended by the Governments of England, France, Austria, and Prussia. But our Government would not allow the dispute to be settled. Lord Stratford de Redcliffe held private interviews with the Sultan—did his utmost to alarm him—insisted on his rejection of all terms of accommodation with Russia, and promised him the armed assistance of England if war should arise. . . . Now, observe the course taken by our Government. They agreed to the Vienna note; not fewer than five members of this Cabinet have filled the office of Foreign Secretary, and therefore may be supposed capable of comprehending its meaning: it was a note drawn up by the friends of Turkey, and by arbitrators self-constituted on behalf of Turkey; they urged its acceptance on the Russian Government, and the Russian Government accepted it: there was then a dispute about its precise meaning, and Russia agreed, and even proposed, that the arbitrators at Vienna should amend it by explaining it and limiting its meaning, so that no question of its intention should henceforth exist. But, the Turks having rejected it, our Government turned round, and declared the Vienna note, their own note, entirely inadmissible, and defended the conduct of the Turks in having rejected it. The Turks declared war against the advice of the English and French Governments—so, at least, it appears from the Blue Book; but the moment war was declared by Turkey our Government openly applauded it. England, then, was committed to the war. She had promised armed assistance to Turkey—a country without government, and whose administration was at the mercy of contending factions; and, incapable of fixing a policy for herself, she allowed herself to be dragged on by the current of events at Constantinople. She ‘drifted,’ as Lord Clarendon said, exactly describing his own position, into the war, apparently without rudder and without compass. . . . They promised the Turk armed assistance on conditions or without conditions. They, in concert with France, Austria, and Prussia, took the original dispute out of the hands of Russia and Turkey, and formed themselves into a court of arbitration in the interests of Turkey; they made an award, which they declared to be safe and honourable for both parties; this award was accepted by Russia and rejected by Turkey; and they then turned round upon their own award, declared it to be ‘totally inadmissible,’ and made war upon the very country whose Government, at their suggestion and urgent recommendation, had frankly accepted it. At this moment England is engaged in a murderous warfare with Russia, although the Russian Government accepted her own terms of peace, and has been willing to accept them in the sense of England’s own interpretation of them ever since they were offered; and at the same time England is allied with Turkey, whose Government rejected the award of England, and who entered into the war in opposition to the advice of England. Surely, when the Vienna note was accepted by Russia, the Turks should have been prevented from going to war, or should have been allowed to go to war at their own risk.

“I have said nothing here of the fact that all these troubles have sprung out of the demands made by France upon the Turkish Government, and urged in language more insulting than any which has been shown to have been used by Prince Menschikoff. I have said nothing of the diplomatic war which has been raging for many years past in Constantinople, and in which England has been behind no other Power in attempting to subject the Porte to foreign influences. I have said nothing of the abundant evidence there is that we are not only at war with Russia, but with all the Christian population of the Turkish empire, and that we are building up our Eastern policy on a false foundation—namely, on the perpetual maintenance of the most immoral and filthy of all despotisms over one of the fairest portions of the earth which it has desolated, and over a population it has degraded but has not been able to destroy. I have said nothing of the wretched delusion that we are fighting for civilisation in supporting the Turk against the Russian, and against the subject Christian population of Turkey. I have said nothing about our pretended sacrifices for freedom in this war, in which one great and now dominant ally is a monarch

who, last in Europe, struck down a free constitution, and dispersed by military violence a national Representative Assembly.

"My doctrine would have been non-intervention in this case. The danger of the Russian power was a phantom; the necessity of permanently upholding the Mahometan rule in Europe is an absurdity. Our love for civilisation, when we subject the Greeks and Christians to the Turks, is a sham; and our sacrifices for freedom, when working out the behests of the Emperor of the French and coaxing Austria to help us, is a pitiful imposture. The evils of non-intervention were remote and vague, and could neither be weighed nor described in any accurate terms. The good we can judge something of already, by estimating the cost of a contrary policy. And what is that cost? War in the north and south of Europe, threatening to involve every country of Europe. Money, perhaps fifty millions sterling, in the course of expenditure by this country alone, to be raised from the taxes of a people whose extrication from ignorance and poverty can only be hoped for from the continuance of peace. The disturbance of trade throughout the world, the derangement of monetary affairs, and difficulties and ruin to thousands of families. Another year of high prices of food, notwithstanding a full harvest in England, chiefly because war interferes with imports, and we have declared our principal foreign food-growers to be our enemies. The loss of human life to an enormous extent. Many thousands of our own countrymen have already perished of pestilence and in the field; and hundreds, perhaps thousands, of English families will be plunged into sorrow, as a part of the penalty to be paid for the folly of the nation and its rulers.

"When the time comes for the 'inquisition for blood,' who shall answer for these things? You have read the tidings from the Crimea; you have, perhaps, shuddered at the slaughter; you remember the terrific picture—I speak not of the battle, and the charge, and the tumultuous excitement of the conflict, but of the field after the battle—Russians, in their frenzy or their terror, shooting Englishmen who would have offered them water to quench their agony of thirst; Englishmen, in crowds, rifling the pockets of the men they had slain or wounded, taking their few shillings or roubles, and discovering among the plunder of the stiffening corpses images of the 'Virgin and the Child.' You have read this, and your imagination has followed the fearful details. This is war,—every crime which human nature can commit or imagine, every horror it can perpetrate or suffer; and this it is which our Christian Government recklessly plunges into, and which so many of our countrymen at this moment think it patriotic to applaud! You must excuse me if I cannot go with you. I will have no part in this terrible crime. My hands shall be unstained with the blood which is being shed. The necessity of maintaining themselves in office may influence an administration; delusions may mislead a people; *Pattel* may afford you a law and a defence; but no respect for men who form a Government, no regard I have for 'going with the stream,' and no fear of being deemed wanting in patriotism, shall influence me in favour of a policy which, in my conscience, I believe to be as criminal before God as it is destructive of the true interest of my country."

This letter provoked a great deal of discussion and comment. It was condemned almost as widely as it was canvassed. Of course, it was not to be expected that either the opinions or arguments were likely to command impartial consideration in the midst of such prepossession and excitement as then prevailed on the subject of the war with Russia. The war at that time was popular, but so up to a certain point has been every war in which this country has engaged. Was the war necessary or politic? Were the grounds on which Mr. Bright ventured his own views with reference to the causes which precipitated the war correct? In after-years the general opinion swerved round to the point that Mr. Bright was in the right. But here was a noble man, breasting the current of national feeling, under the strong conviction that the public judgment

was warped by temporary or generous impulse to an impolitic course, leaving futurity to decide the justice of their motives.

No sooner had the letter appeared than every exertion was made to get up a numerously signed requisition to the Mayor of Manchester, requesting him to call a public meeting of the citizens to express their condemnation of the views avowed by Mr. Bright in his notorious letter. This requisition received the signatures of 613 individuals or firms, and no effort was spared to try to prove that there was great dissatisfaction amongst the supporters of Mr. Bright, but when the 613 signatures were examined it was found that amongst them were only fifty of Mr. Bright's supporters. However, the Mayor was obliged to call a public meeting, and it was held on the 17th of December, 1854, in the Town Hall. When Mr. Absalom Watkin mounted the platform there was a call for Mr. Bright, and the hon. gentleman entering by the same door as that by which the audience had entered, was vociferously cheered as he made his way to the platform through the mass of persons. The Mayor, Mr. Benjamin Nicholls, presided. Mr. W. R. Wood was received with a storm of disapprobation, which continued for some time with more or less fury, intermingled with cheers, and the whole of his address could scarcely be heard by persons close to him. He moved the first resolution:—"That this meeting having learned that the letter of Mr. John Bright on the war has been translated and circulated in Russia, desires the public to declare that the citizens of Manchester do not concur in the opinions expressed by Mr. Bright, but, on the contrary, they are convinced that the war is just and necessary, and do earnestly desire that it may be carried on with the utmost vigour until it shall be terminated by an honourable peace." Mr. Absalom Watkin seconded this resolution. Mr. Alderman W. B. Watkins moved as an amendment—"That, whereas, in the requisition presented to the Mayor, requesting him to convene a public meeting of the inhabitants of Manchester, a letter written by Mr. John Bright, our honourable representative in the Commons House of Parliament, to one of his constituents, is alluded to as the cause of the requisition having been got up; it is the opinion of this meeting that Mr. Bright exercised an undoubted right in expressing his opinion on the subject of the war which unhappily exists between this country and Russia; and although this opinion may differ from that of many of his constituents, it would be unfair, tyrannical, and unjust, to censure him, even by implication, for the manly avowal of his sentiments upon a subject so important

to the welfare of all classes in the kingdom." Mr. Alexander Henry seconded the amendment. Mr. William Entwisle spoke in favour of the original motion. Mr. John Bright followed, but could scarcely be heard, as the cheers and groans were loud and continuous. For ten minutes he remained standing, unable to be heard on account of the noise, yet determined not to retire until he had been heard.

"Calmly he viewed them—conscious that his ends
Were right, and truth and innocence his friends."

At last, amidst continued disturbance, which rendered the words inaudible except to the reporters, who clustered round him, he said :—

"The gentlemen who have spoken on the other side may disclaim any wish in the proceedings of this day to make any attack upon me, and yet their friends in the body of the meeting are evidently anxious that not a word that I have to say shall be heard by the meeting. I shall not occupy more than a very few minutes in saying that on this question of peace or war I claim for myself to have the right freely to express my views, and if I am unfortunate enough not to coincide with the views of any portion of my constituents I regret it extremely, but I shall not surrender my claim. I have on many occasions differed from a large portion of my constituents, but I have never flinched from that which I believe to be true and right with regard to public affairs, and I shall not flinch from it now. The object of my letter was to lead, if possible, public opinion to a peaceful temper, in the hope that the Government might find no obstacle in their way when any opportunity offered for bringing about a restoration of public tranquillity. I do not regret having written that letter; I am able to prove everything that is in it, and I rejoice in the discussion which it has created, not in Manchester only, but throughout the kingdom, and in many parts also of the continent of Europe. . . . My object is to avert from England and from Europe this great calamity of war, and whatever may be the result to me personally, I shall never shrink from taking the course which I have taken up to this hour."

Five times the Mayor called upon the meeting for the expression of their opinions, but so evenly balanced was the show of hands that the Mayor declared that he was not able to decide the matter, and accordingly dismissed the meeting. Mr. Bright was hooted, insulted, and threats of violence were used against him by some of those who did not agree with his opinions on the war, but his bearing was firm and fearless.

Mr. Bright's friends held a meeting the same evening at Newall's Buildings, and Mr. Bright there delivered a lengthy speech.

"The war," he declared, "will double the army of Russia, will double the army of Austria, will increase the army of Prussia, increase the army of France, and double the armies of this country. (Cheers.) Do you think that when all these armies are doubled, and men's minds are led off from the contemplation of everything in the form of home affairs, when every man's mind is filled with thoughts of slaughter and glory, and by your literature tinged with the same thing—I ask you whether that plant of freedom, which was matured, it is true, by the blood of your ancestors, and nourished by the tears and prayers of those who have gone before us—I ask you whether you think that, after this war, liberty in Europe, reform or anything good in the politics of this country, will be in a better position than

before this war commenced? (Applause and cries of 'No.') Rely upon it that the verdict of events will be given, if there can be no verdict to-day. And that verdict of events will be given in our favour." (Cheers.)

The meeting unanimously tendered to Mr. Bright a vote of thanks "for the manliness with which he has stood forward in the face of such a meeting as that we have left, to avow his unflinching attachment to those principles which have hitherto guided his conduct, and will continue to guide him."

Mr. Cobden more than once told Mr. Bright that when the people themselves were in a state of frenzy, when their reason seemed as if dethroned, it was useless to argue with them, and he recommended Mr. Bright to wait until there came a cooler and a more reasonable time. Cobden meanwhile looked on sad and dejected, waiting the termination of the strife, but Bright could not look on calmly when he read of the shocking slaughter of his countrymen, and of fields covered with the dead. He availed himself of every opportunity of entering his protest against the continuance of this useless war, which entailed the shedding of so much blood, and the waste of vast treasure.

There are few things in history so noble and, at the same time, so tenderly moving as the incidents in Mr. Bright's life. There is a sincerity and a reality in everything that he says. His pathos is no bright cold gleam of the imagination, but bursts warm from the heart. It would be difficult to find, in the annals of any country, an instance of more splendid popularity than Mr. Bright's up to the breaking out of this war; and yet, perhaps, there never was an occasion upon which the fickleness of popular favour was more strikingly or basely exemplified. Yet through all that stormy time he never swerved for a moment from the position he had assumed. Nothing in his life was so noble as his attitude towards the warlike spirit of 1855. Previously his ears were filled with the praises of his countrymen. Now, however, he found himself cast out by auditories who had hung on his very words. Amid all this he never flinched from the path of duty.

One of Mr. Bright's most powerful and profound speeches was delivered in the House of Commons on the 22nd of December, 1854. Certainly the House was not with him; that was of course impossible. He had, however, the most deferential attention, deepening every instant. The rapid piling up of his charges, the accumulation of his proofs, the cogency of his argument, and the impetuosity of his conclusions equalled anything of the kind yet delivered. It was as superior to any mere parliamentary vituperation as the subject itself was

superior to the trivial and evanescent personalities that impart piquancy to individual exhibitors in the public arena. It was in vain that official callousness assumed an unconsciousness of its force. Before he had got half into the speech, almost every man on the ministerial bench had turned round in his seat, and gazed at the speaker. Lord John Russell tried desperately to do the dignified, and covered his face with his hands, which he occasionally removed to attempt a spasmodic laugh; but when Mr. Bright came to talk of Colonel Boyle and the widow, and the five little orphans, the tears started to the eyes of many a brave man who heard him, and Lord John laughed no more.

"We all know what we have lost in this House," remarked Mr. Bright. "Here sitting near me, very often sat the member for Frome (Colonel Boyle). I met him a short time before he went out at Mr. Westerton's, the bookseller's, near Hyde Park Corner. I asked him whether he was going out? He answered, he was afraid he was; not afraid in the sense of personal fear—he knew not that; but he said, with a look and a tone I shall never forget, 'It is not a light matter for a man who has a wife and five children.' The stormy Euxine is his grave; his wife is a widow, his children fatherless. On the other side of the House sat a member with whom I was not acquainted, who has lost his life (Colonel Blair). Who is there that does not recollect his frank, courageous, and manly countenance? I doubt whether there were any men on either side of the House who were more capable of fixing the goodwill and affection of those with whom they were associated. Well, but the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever."

At the outset of Mr. Bright's speech Lord Palmerston "had pulled his hat over his eyes, folded his arms, and thrown himself back in his seat—his custom always of an afternoon, especially when afternoon gets towards next morning. But case-hardened as he was to every emotion, inured by fifty consecutive years of parliamentary fighting on both sides, for and against almost every cause, he was so completely roused by Mr. Bright that he could not maintain even the sham of seeming torpidity from the most casual observer. True, he too tried to laugh—not, like Lord John, at that part of Mr. Bright's speech which spoke of the accuracy of his own judgment, but at that passage when the member for Manchester talked of the member for Tiverton upsetting the New Testament in a couple of sentences at an agricultural dinner. Short-lived, however, was the merriment. For presently Mr. Bright passed on to the 'buffooneries at the Reform Club,' and contrasted the general flippant levity of this Ministry, amidst the grief and mourning that then filled the land, with the grave decorum of Peel, even in the shadow of an anticipated war; and he laughed no more. As for Mr. Gladstone he seemed much distressed. With the two exceptions, Disraeli and Graham, everybody was deeply affected. . . .

This extraordinary Philippic did not last more than half an hour, yet all the Coalition could not furnish a debater to reply to it. The consternation of Ministers as they hurriedly whispered when Bright sat down, the painful silence (far more significant than the most tumultuous applause) that pervaded the benches, as if there had been affirmed some dread calamity for which there was neither denial nor remedy—all told emphatically that Bright's point was the point."

"I am not, nor did I ever pretend to be, a statesman," said Mr. Bright; "but that character is so tainted and so equivocal in our day, that I am not sure that a pure and honourable ambition would aspire to it. I have not enjoyed for thirty years, like these noble Lords, the emoluments of office. I have not set my sails to every passing breeze. I am a plain and simple citizen, sent here by one of the foremost constituencies of the Empire, representing, feebly perhaps, but honestly, the opinions of very many, and the true interests of all that have sent me here. Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, or of an incompetent and guilty Ministry. And, even if I were alone, if my voice were the solitary one raised amid the din of arms and the clamours of a venal press, I should have the consolation I have to-night—and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence—the priceless consolation that I have never uttered one word that could promote the squandering of my country's treasure, or the spilling of one single drop of my country's blood."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE CRIMEAN WAR.

Lord Russell's Oxford Reform Bill—Mismanagement in the Crimea—Proposals of Peace—Mr. Bright with his Constituents—Discussing the Subject of the Prosecution of the War—With his Townsmen—Failing Health—Letter to his Constituents and the Reply—The Termination of the War.

MR. BRIGHT's public speaking during the Anti-Corn-Law crusade was certainly powerful, still he had amazingly advanced in force and finish since that time. The attention he exacted from the House of Commons, notwithstanding the unpopularity of his views on the question of war, was the best tribute to his great abilities. Indeed, some short time before this date, Lord John Russell, at a political dinner in his own house, said he considered Mr. John Bright to be the most powerful speaker in the House of Commons.

During the session Lord John Russell introduced his Oxford Reform Bill, which was intended to make further provision for the good government and extension of the University of Oxford and its colleges. Mr. Bright, in opposing this measure, remarked that:—

"It seemed to him that two principles had been at work in the formation of this Bill, which was the result of a compromise between them, and he thought it was a question whether a Cabinet that could not agree on the fundamental principles of a measure should bring it forward. He felt a repugnance to assist in the tinkering amendment of an institution from which, though national, he as a Dissenter was excluded, and with which he had no sympathy. You do not exclude us when you send your tax-gatherers round, or when you ask for the performance of the duties of citizenship; you do not exclude us from the statistical tables of your population, of your industry, of your wealth, of your renown. You take all your population in, and say, 'This is a great, an united people, which are called the British people;' and you declare in your speeches and perorations that you are proud to rule over such a nation. But when you come to the question of education in the institutions which you call national Universities, then you, the House of Commons, and you the Liberal-Conservative, or the Conservative and Liberal Administration—you who occupy the offices from which you ignominiously ejected your predecessors—you who say there are no men to come after you—you ask us to accept a Bill of this pusillanimous and tinkering character, insulting, as I have already described it, to one-half the population of the country."

Mr. Bright also, during this session, supported a bill for the repeal of the stamp duty on newspapers and periodicals, and he pointed out how the spread of knowledge and education was seriously retarded by the existing law.

Mr. Berkeley introduced a Bill in favour of the Ballot, and Mr. Bright, in supporting it, expressed the opinion that intimidation prevailed at almost all the contested elections in the United Kingdom. Scenes took place at contested elections which were not only degrading to the country, but to human nature itself. He believed that so great was this evil, that it very much warped all their efforts, whether by education or by religious influence, to improve the standard of morality, patriotism, and honourable feeling amongst the people. Moreover, no harm would arise from the experiment of the Ballot, while a candidate who could not then get a vote by intimidation or threats might get one by kindness, argument, and persuasion. The Bill was thrown out by a narrow majority.

Sir W. Clay brought in a measure to abolish Church Rates. Mr. Bright gave it his support, but it was lost by a majority of 27.

In the Estimates it was proposed to grant £38,745 to defray the expenses of the Nonconforming, Seceding, and Protestant Dissenting ministers in Ireland. Mr. Bright objected to the grant, but the vote was carried by a majority of 87.

In January, 1855, the members of the Liberal party of Manchester got up a soirée in the Corn Exchange in honour of Messrs. Gibson and Bright, and amongst other gentlemen present were Messrs. R. Cobden, John Cheetham, M.P., Joseph Crook, M.P., Edward Miall, M.P., James Kershaw, M.P.; George Hadfield, M.P., L. Heyworth, M.P., the Duke de Rousellon, Major-General Thompson, and a large number of gentlemen from the surrounding towns. Mr. George Wilson presided.

"I know I am opposed to many of my countrymen," remarked Mr. Bright in his speech; "I am opposed doubtless to many in Manchester, and to some even in this audience, but that opposition, that discordance, will last only for a time. (Applause.) You know that I have never flattered either court or cabinet, and I will not now stoop to flatter even the people. (Cheers.) I know that passion forms no part of reason, and can be no solid foundation for the truth. I behold the abyss into which multitudes would plunge the country. If I cannot save them from it, if they will not save themselves, at least I will warn them of their danger, and I will be no partner in the deeds which I am convinced in my conscience will receive, as they well merit, the condemnation of posterity." (Tremendous cheers.)

At the annual meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, in February, 1855, Mr Bright made an opportune speech on the general commercial consequences of the war, but more especially on the influence it exercised over the price of food.

"At this moment," said Mr. Bright, "if it were not for the annoyance which it gives to many spinners and manufacturers to see their works shut two or three days a week, and their hands idling about, and were it not that they don't like to appear to submit to pressure which their neighbours are still able and willing to bear—if it were not for that—a feeling of pride to a large extent—or a feeling of goodwill to the workpeople in some, or for a hopefulness that things will mend in others, and that determination not to be beaten which is common to Englishmen, I am sorry to say, even when they are wrong—if it were not for all these causes, men who carry on business at this moment six days a week would probably far more rationally be working four or three days. Well, then you come to the condition of your population. Now, what is that condition? Take two years ago—three years ago. At that time every man who was charitably disposed was like a frozen-out gardener: there was nothing for him to do. All places for benefactions—soup kitchens and things of that kind—were shut up for the want of paupers. Well, now you find, if you go to the Chorlton Union, the Manchester Union, or any Union—I believe there is scarcely a Union throughout the kingdom in which, at this moment, the increase of poor rates is not most marked. In some of the London Unions the increase of paupers is absolutely frightful; and I doubt much if in any Union in the country the increase in poor rates has not been strongly marked during the last year. (Hear, hear.) And whereas two years ago you hardly ever saw a beggar, unless it was some poor man who was so from long habit or actual incapacity—one of those poor men whom everybody allows to go about and live upon his neighbours—there were no beggars to be found. Well, now we all know—at least I know as far as regards my house, and our works, and our neighbours, where I believe we are much better off than in many parts of the country—beggars are increasing every day, and becoming almost as great a trouble as they were ten or fifteen years ago; and at the same time the applications for employment on the part of those who certainly do not wish to beg are very much more increased than they were some time ago. I said that in our town (Rochdale) we are not so badly off as in many places. The flannel trade has been brisk, I believe; frosty weather is favourable, but Government contracts have added to the activity of that particular branch of trade. Some men, because they have got Government contracts, fancy that trade is good, and that the war is good for trade. Why, it is but carrying on the trade of Rochdale, or Dewsbury, or anywhere else, by the taxation of the country at large; and it is just like, as somebody has described it, endeavouring to keep a dog alive by feeding him with his own tail." (Laughter.)

About this time it was found that the English troops, many of whom were mere boys, had been suffering terribly in the Crimea through mismanagement, and it was proved before a select committee of the House of Commons that there had been inefficiency and utter confusion. Mr. Dundas had seen shiploads of fresh vegetables lying in Balaklava which remained there until they went rotten; the army at that time was suffering severely from scurvy, and these vegetables had been expressly sent for as the only remedy for that disease. At the cavalry camp, about a mile from Balaklava, horses were picketed without clothing or any other protection from the inclement weather. They were, moreover, starving; although all the time, within a mile and a half of Balaklava, tons of bran in bags were lying on the muddy banks of the harbour, and it seemed to be the duty of no one to convey this food to the horses. While the army was perishing with cold at the camp and in the trenches, there were lying in the harbour, close at hand, and easily procurable,

immense quantities of drift-wood, the remains of numerous vessels wrecked in the severe snowstorm, but no hand was allowed by those in authority to touch or gather it. The hospitals in the Bosphorus were also kept in a filthy state; in fact, the army was short of medical attendance, short of food and clothing, short, in fact, of everything that it needed.

The mourners of those who had perished were to be seen frequently parading English towns and villages; their hearths had been rendered desolate; their modest homes had been broken up for ever by the criminal waste of British life in the East; and thousands "of desolate women in their far-off homes waited to hear the step that never came." Meanwhile, persons who had been in pretty good circumstances when the war commenced lost their situations through the depression in trade. The consequence was the little they had stored to meet the hour of accident or crippling age was soon consumed, and shoals of them sought daily bread from public charity.

Mr. Bright delivered another speech on the war, on the 23rd of February, in the House of Commons:—

"Whatever may be said," remarked Mr. Bright, "about the honour of the country in any other relation involved in this affair, this, at least, I expect every man who hears me to admit—that if terms of peace have been offered, they have been offered in good faith, and shall be in honour and good faith adhered to; so that if, unfortunately for Europe and humanity, there should be any failure at Vienna, no man should point to the English Government and to the authorities and rulers of this Christian country, and say that we have prolonged the war and the infinite calamities of which it is the cause. I have said that I was anxious that the Government of the noble lord should not be overthrown. Will the House allow me to say why I am so? The noble lord at the head of the Government has long been a great authority with many persons in this country upon foreign policy. His late colleague, the present envoy to Vienna, has long been a great authority with a large portion of the people of this country upon almost all political questions. With the exception of that unhappy selection of an ambassador at Constantinople, I hold that there are no men in this country more truly responsible for our present position in this war than the noble lord who now fills the highest office in the State and the noble lord who is now, I trust, rapidly approaching the scene of his labours in Vienna. I do not say this now to throw blame upon those noble lords, because their policy, which I hold to be wrong, they, without doubt, as firmly believe to be right; but I am only stating facts. It has been their policy that they have entered into war for certain objects, and I am sure that neither the noble lord at the head of the Government nor his late colleague, the noble lord the member for London, will shrink from the responsibility which attaches to them. Well, Sir, now we have those noble lords in a position which is, in my humble opinion, favourable to the termination of the troubles which exist. I think that the noble lord at the head of the Government himself would have more influence in stilling whatever may exist of clamour in this country than any other member of this House. I think, also, that the noble lord the member for London would not have undertaken the mission to Vienna if he had not entertained some strong belief that, by so doing, he might bring the war to an end. Nobody gains reputation by a failure in negotiation, and as that noble lord is well acquainted with the whole question from beginning to end, I entertain a hope—I will not say a sanguine hope—that the result of that mission to Vienna will be to bring about a peace, to extricate this country from some of those difficulties inseparable from a state of

war. There is one subject upon which I should like to put a question to the noble lord at the head of the Government. I shall not say one word here about the state of the army in the Crimea, or one word about its numbers or its condition. Every member of this House, every inhabitant of this country, has been sufficiently harrowed with details regarding it. To my solemn belief thousands, nay, scores of thousands, of persons have retired to rest night after night, whose slumbers have been disturbed, or whose dreams have been busied, with the sufferings and agonies of our soldiers in the Crimea. I should like to ask the noble lord at the head of the Government—although I am not sure if he will feel that he can or ought to answer the question—whether the noble lord the member for London has power after the discussion has commenced, as soon as there shall be established good grounds for believing that the negotiations for peace will prove successful, to enter into any armistice? (No, no, and Hear, hear.) I know not, sir, who it is says ‘No, no,’ but I should like to see any man get up and say that the destruction of 200,000 human lives lost on all sides during the course of this unhappy war is not a sufficient sacrifice. You are not pretending to conquer territory—you are not pretending to hold fortified towns; you have offered terms of peace which, as I understand them, I do not say are not moderate; and breathes there a man in this House, or in the country, whose appetite for blood is so insatiable that, even when terms of peace have been offered and accepted, he pines for that assault in which of Russians, Turks, French, and English, as sure as one man dies, 20,000 corpses will strew the streets of Sebastopol. (Hear, hear.) I should like to know, and venture to hope, if the noble lord can adopt a course by which all future waste of human life may be put an end to, and the enmities between the great nations healed up. . . . I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—many such homes may be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive. The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the firstborn were slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two sideposts of our doors that he may spare and pass on. He takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and the lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal.”

This beautiful passage literally thrilled those present, stirring to their inmost depths hearts that had no friendly feeling towards the speaker. The language, almost inspired, was delivered in a tone which seemed to have caught an energy not of this world’s creation. All felt the solemn and awful reality which was thus figuratively depicted, and amongst many there was a sense of something like repentance for having been deluded into taking part in promoting a war that had sacrificed so much human life.

The acute observer must have noticed that the style of Mr. Bright’s oratory had gradually improved up to this date. He displayed, apparently without effort, all the accomplishments of the orator. His illustrations are not forced, and nearly the whole of his pastoral thoughts and images are taken from the Bible and Milton. To the same healing fountain he refers when his heart is troubled, and images of peace and repose are more acceptable to his mind than the applause of towns and crowded senates.

At a meeting at Newall’s Buildings, Manchester, on the 6th of March, Mr. Bright thus concluded a speech:—

"I confess when I see all that is going on in the increase of trade, of population, of wealth, and all that many men are contemplating to do with regard to education, and with regard to morals and religion in this country, I cannot but be oppressed with the melancholy feeling that if this doctrine of constant intervention in the countries of Europe be one which we are to espouse and to act upon, this country cannot by any possibility continue prosperous, and all the virtue that our people profess cannot save us long from perils of the most fearful character, which will endanger the monarchy itself and every institution of the country which we value. (Hear, hear.) For war is a fiend of such insatiable appetite that it will swallow up all that the most ingenious industry can create; and virtue, and education, and power alike, however they may appear for a moment to receive some glory from successful war, must at last fall under this worst of demons that can afflict any country; and when I find men going about our streets laughing at us, ridiculing us, telling us that we are not patriotic, I ask if there had been somebody sixty years ago to take this principle of non-intervention up, and to adopt it, and to carry it out in our Government, should we not have escaped that long and odious war, with its expenditure of fifteen hundred millions of money—should we not have been free from the barbarism and degradation which now run riot over our population—and should we not have stood, not by force of arms, but by force of character and true greatness, infinitely more the arbiter of Europe than we ever can be by the greatest fleets, or by the most powerful and enormous armies?" (Prolonged cheering.)

A large meeting was held in the Town Hall, Manchester, on the 6th of April, to hear addresses on the subject of the war. Mr. Bright's speech extended over three columns, and on this occasion he said:—

"I confess that, for myself, I bow my head with shame when I look back upon the follies and crimes that this nation, of which I am a citizen, has to my mind been guilty of. (Hear, hear.) And then at this moment I feel humiliated because we find ourselves in such a helpless condition; for with this feeling of shame and disgust there appears to be nothing whatever done or doing on the part of the nation to bring the Government to a better course, and to extricate ourselves from the difficulties into which we have so passionately plunged ourselves. We have a Government, as we all know, of distinguished men—that is distinguished, some of them, by lines of ancestry—(laughter)—more correctly and exactly recorded than anything of which we down here pretend to boast of. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) We have a Government, as we have had for the last two years, made up almost exclusively of lords—(hear, hear)—men who do not consider it necessary for them or becoming in them, one or the other, to engage in those avocations which in Lancashire are generally considered to be befitting to almost all men, and honourable certainly to all who are engaged in them. (Hear, hear.) We have a Government of lords, of hereditary persons who kindly undertake to rule this great nation, charging us £5,000 a year for each of these persons, and they consider it very often extremely impertinent if we make any comment upon the manner in which we are governed. Now, I am one of those who believe, notwithstanding that we have seen foolish of late, that there is wisdom enough, manly strength enough, power or intellect enough, morality enough in this country to afford us a very much better Government than we have seen of late. (Cheers.) Possibly when we take matters a little more into our own hands we may find that the national affairs can be managed somewhat better than they have been in recent years."

In the House of Commons, on the 7th of June, 1855, in the discussion respecting the prosecution of the war, Mr. Bright said:—

"Is war the only thing a nation enters upon in which the cost is never to be reckoned? Is it nothing that in twelve months you have sacrificed 20,000 or 30,000 men, who a year ago were your own fellow-citizens, living in your midst, and interested, as you are, in all the social and political occurrences of the day? Is it nothing that, in addition to those lives, a sum of—I am almost afraid to say how much, but £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 will not be beyond the mark—has already been expended?

And let the House bear in mind this solemn fact—that the four nations engaged in this war have already lost so many men, that if you were to go from Chelsea to Blackwall, and from Highgate and Hampstead to Norwood, and take every man of a fighting age and put him to death—if you did this you would not sacrifice a larger number of lives than have already been sacrificed in these twelve months of war. Your own troops, as you know, have suffered, during a Crimean winter, tortures and horrors which the great Florentine hardly imagined when he wrote his immortal epic. Hon. members are ready, I know, to say, ‘Whose fault is that?’ But if our loss has been less than that of the French, less than that of the Turks, and less than that of the Russians, it is fair to assume that, whatever mistakes may have been committed by the Government, the loss in the aggregate would, even under other circumstances, have fallen very little short of that which I have attempted to describe. Are these things to be accounted nothing? We have had for twelve years past a gradual reduction of taxation, and there has been an immense improvement in the physical, intellectual, and moral condition of the people of this country; while for the last two years we have commenced a career of reimposing taxes, have had to apply for a loan, and no doubt, if this war goes on, extensive loans are still in prospect. Hon. members may think this is nothing. They say it is a ‘low’ view of the case. But, these things are the foundation of your national greatness, and of your national duration; and you may be following visionary phantoms in all parts of the world while your own country is becoming rotten within, and calamities may be in store for the monarchy and the nation of which now, it appears, you take no heed. Every man connected with trade knows how much trade has suffered, how much profits in every branch of trade—except in contracts arising out of the war—have diminished, how industry is becoming more precarious and the reward for industry less, how the price of food is raised, and how much there is of a growing pressure of all classes, especially upon the poorest of the people—a pressure, which by-and-by—not just now, when the popular frenzy is lashed into fury morning after morning by the newspapers—[Murmurs]—but I say by-and-by this discontent will grow rapidly, and you (pointing to the Ministerial bench) who now fancy you are fulfilling the behests of the national will, will find yourselves pointed to as the men who ought to have taught the nation better.

“I will not enter into the question of the harvest. That is in the hand of Providence, and may Providence grant that the harvest may be as bountiful as it was last year! But the House must recollect that in 1853, only two years ago, there was the worst harvest that had been known for forty years. Prices were very high in consequence. Last year the harvest was the greatest ever known, yet prices have been scarcely lower, and there are not wanting men of great information and of sound judgment who look with much alarm to what may come—I trust it may not come—if we should have, in addition to the calamities of war, calamities arising from a scarcity of food, which may be scarcely less destructive of the peace and comfort of the population of this country. . . . It certainly appears to me to be unjustifiable that while Lord Aberdeen was honestly endeavouring to bring the negotiations to a peaceful conclusion, the noble lord was taking a course which rendered statesmanship valueless in conducting the foreign policy of the nation. The noble lord, however, at last brought his conduct to a climax. The hon. member for Sheffield (Mr. J. A. Roebuck) came forward as a Little David—(loud laughter)—with a sling and stone, weapons which he did not often use—(hear, hear)—at the sight of which the Whig Goliath—(renewed laughter)—went howling and vanquished to the back benches. (Loud cheers and laughter.) The noble lord the member for London (Lord John Russell) was the captain of the State vessel, and the noble lord the member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston) was the mate; but how is it now? The noble lord the member for the city of London has accepted the position of mate in the most perilous times, in the most tempestuous weather, and with no chart he goes to sea on a most dangerous and interminable voyage, and with the very reckless captain whom he would not trust as mate. (Cheers and laughter.) The noble lord the member for London has made a defence of his conduct at Vienna. I am willing to give him credit that he did then honestly intend peace; but I do think that when he goes again, and on such a journey, he will do well to leave some of his historic knowledge behind him. (Laughter.) They were indeed historic fancies. There is nothing to me so out of place as the comparison which the noble lord made between the limitation of the Russian fleet in the Black Sea and the destruction of Dunkirk, or between the condition of the Black Sea and that of the lakes of North America. (Hear, hear.) I have observed the noble viscount’s conduct ever since I had the honour of a seat in this House; and the noble viscount will excuse me if I state the

reasons why I have often opposed him. The reason is that the noble viscount treats all these questions and the House itself with such a want of seriousness—(cheers)—that it has appeared to me that he has no serious, or sufficiently serious, conviction of the important business that so constantly comes before this House. (Cheers and laughter.) I judge the noble viscount as a man who has experience, but who with experience has not gained wisdom—as a man who has age, but who, with age, has not the gravity of age—(cheers and laughter)—and who, now occupying the highest seat of power has—and I say it with pain—not appeared affected with a due sense of the responsibility that belongs to that elevated position. (Cheers.) We are now just in the hands of those two noble lords. They are the authors of the war. It lies between them that peace was not made at Vienna upon some proper terms. (Hear, hear.) And whatever disasters may be in store for this country, or for Europe, they will lie at the doors of these noble lords.”

In the discussion on Mr. Roebuck's vote of censure upon the Government, in July, which was lost by a majority of 107, Mr. Bright, in alluding to the conduct of Lord Palmerston, said :—

“He seems to me to be insensible to the fact that clouds are gathering round the horizon of this country; he appears not to know that his policy is the doom of death to thousands upon thousands, carrying desolation to the homes of England, and sorrow to millions of hearts. He may perchance never see that which comes often to my vision—the interminable ghastly procession of our slaughtered countrymen, to which every day fresh lists of victims are added. I see these things; I speak in apprehension of them; and in their presence I have no confidence in the noble lord, whose conduct is, I believe, humiliating to the House and full of peril to the country.” (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Bright was present at the Hulme Friendly Society's festival on the 27th of September, and, in alluding to his career, he said :—

“I went into the House of Commons unexpectedly and accidentally. I have been at my post for twelve years, and no man is able to say that during that time I have acted upon any other principle than those which I previously expounded—(cheers)—or that I have ever shown any desire to promote any other interest than that of the whole country of which I am a citizen. (Cheers.) My notion is that the legislation of this country should not be a legislation of politicians and statesmen, according to their antiquated theories, but a legislation based upon just, moral, and Christian principles; and being so, I believe Government would be perfectly secure, for the people who were well governed would generally be contented and happy.” (Cheers.)

The Liberals of Rochdale met on the 3rd of October for the purpose of presenting Mr. W. Sharman Crawford, their late member, with a silver candelabrum, as a testimony of their esteem for his public services while representing them in Parliament for a period of eleven years. Mr. Bright was one of the speakers, and in a part of his speech he remarked :—

“I forget sometimes when speaking here whether I am speaking as an inhabitant of Rochdale or whether I am speaking in rather a more public character; and I am sometimes disposed to pay compliments which I could pay with greater modesty if I came from somewhere else, but which I feel a difficulty in paying while here, as it seems as if one were complimenting one's self. (Laughter.) But I do take great delight in this feeling, that for twenty years past at least—I think with very little exception ever since this borough was enfranchised—we have endeavoured to perform our duty to our country faithfully, in the exercise of our rights as citizens and as electors. We have not spent enormous sums, and we have not to any great extent exercised undue or improper influence; we have not sold our political power, but we have endeavoured, whether at home or abroad, to seek for men to represent us who could

come before us with unspotted private and unspotted public characters, whose true and honest object in going to Parliament was to advance that which is good and moral and just in the legislation of the country. (Cheers.) I take the liberty of thinking that the questions about which we have shown great interest have generally been those on which the welfare of the country did most depend. (Hear, hear.) Unfortunately, now we find ourselves in tempestuous times, and I am not sure whether we have either rudder or compass, or know exactly whither we are driving. But looking back over a series of years, we have been anxious to make the industry of this country perfectly free, by which every man, be he poor or be he rich, should have a fair field and no favour, and no legal or legislative impediments to his progress and to his success. . . . Now, I have not a particle of regard for a newspaper any more than I have for anybody else, unless I can see in what is urged, and the arguments that are used, an honest spirit. I confess for myself—I can say it with truth—that often as I have spoken, in Parliament or out of it, to my countrymen, I have never to my knowledge stated that to be a fact which I did not believe to be so, and I have never made use of any argument which I did not think was fair and honest, as bearing upon the question. (Cheers.) Therefore, when I discuss with other men I like to have a return of that honesty in regard to the question. If what I have said about the press is reported in the press, of course I shall be abused by the press. But I have heard Lord John Russell say in the House of Commons, without contradiction, that in the year 1808, when there was a peace made between England and France—a peace which lasted only a few months—the reason the Government could not preserve the peace was not that Napoleon wanted to break it, but that the press of England stimulated the people, concealed what would have been the true interests of the people, and made it impossible for the Government to preserve the peace. The result of that was eleven years of the most extensive war which has ever taken place in modern times. The eleven years of war made hundreds of thousands of beggars and criminals within the United Kingdom, and every £100 now which our Chancellor takes in taxes for this war is making also its pauper or its criminal. Don't let us be told that if it be a righteous war we are not to regard the cost. The war may be honourable, but I assure you that those little children of yours, who are now ornamenting your homes and gladdening your hearts, when they grow up to be men and women, and look back to the history of the times through which we are now passing, they will have wonderful difficulty to discover in the restoration of Mohammedan power, or the humiliation of Russia, or the glory of the British arms, anything that can compensate them for the crushing taxes from which they can only escape by emigrating from a country which should have afforded them a happy home during their lives." (Loud cheers.)

The members of the Marsden Institute invited Mr. Bright to their annual meeting, which was held in a large room on the premises of Messrs. William Ecroyd and Son, Lorneshaye, near Burnley, on the 14th of December, and he explained that

"Whenever he could possibly do so, he spent three or four hours of an evening reading some works of history and of biography, and he never went to bed with more perfect feeling of enjoyment, or more strengthened, than when he had so spent the evening. He did not in the least believe in the grand schemes of policy advanced by kings, queens, or cabinets, which flew in the face of almost ordinary resolutions of Christian morality, as applied to our own conduct; and there was no greater evil that came from the state of twilight to which he had alluded than that we were always getting into a state of panic. A man wholly ignorant or half informed was not only the most ignorant of real danger, but he was the most likely to be alarmed where no danger existed. Such was very often the condition of this country. Every three or four years we had a panic, at which four or five years afterwards all the world laughed. Let them at any rate bring up their children so that they should read and think, and then if they ever went into war they should know its definite object, cost, probable result, and whether the thing to be obtained would at all pay for the charges of blood and treasure that would have to be incurred. Many might say that he had no business to go into this question. (Hear, hear.) But if they had to talk to people it was no use talking about what they thought they understood as well as themselves, or about things in which they felt no interest.

(Hear, hear.) He was a politician, unfortunately, and was obliged to pay attention to these subjects as much as the surgeon to anatomy or the physician to medicine, and that which he had examined and thought he understood, and in which his ideas had deep interest, could hardly be a question that he could be blamed for touching upon at some length." (Hear, hear.)

When Mr. Jacob Bright, sen., began business on his own account, he employed a mechanic named Whitehead, who, in the year 1820, emigrated to America, with the intention of improving his condition in life, and ultimately he was successful. During his residence there, his thoughts often fondly wandered to his own native town across the Atlantic. His imagination frequently recalled the familiar and sonorous sound of the mill-bell, the genial and beloved face and figure of his employer (Mr. Jacob Bright), the pleasant faces of his fellow-workmen, the noisy cawing of the multitude of rooks which made Foxhole's Wood their home, and while he yearned over these many associations of his native town, the pleasant walks rose up before his memory. Can we wonder that an Englishman, being absent from his native land for thirty-six years, should determine to undertake the then somewhat perilous voyage across the Atlantic, so that he might once more visit the haunts of his boyhood, and see again friends amongst whom his early life had been spent? He set sail for Liverpool, and although the steamer ploughed with the usual rapidity through the waves, yet it did not keep pace with his desire. The sailor-watchman's warning, "Land ahead," was received with joy. It was England—a name that had grown more precious since he had left its shores. Having at last disembarked, he lost no time in travelling to Rochdale, and he speedily repaired to the residence of Mr. Samuel Tweedale, the manager of Messrs. Bright's factories. Over the tea-tray Mr. Tweedale gave an outline of the events which had transpired during his absence, and the saddest news he had to tell his visitor was the death of his old employer, and of numerous other friends. The two men left the house, and the Anglo-Yankee was again disappointed when he found that his rural walks of the past had been intruded upon by dwellings. The cawing rooks, so fondly remembered, when far away, had dwindled, and both birds and trees were scanty in numbers. All he had examined so far caused depression; but lo! the dear old sound of the mill-bell greeted his ear, and his face brightened, as if he was in gladsome mood, listening to some enchanting music, and as if he were young again. Next he visited some old comrades, who welcomed him in true Lancashire fashion. Lastly, he went to the quiet grave-yard of "The Friends' Meeting House," to view the grave of his lost

employer. Then he began to reflect on the career of Mr. John Bright, for his fame had long since crossed the ocean, and he found that the condition of the working class had been greatly improved, mainly owing to the labours of Mr. Bright and his colleagues. Still, when he contrasted the social condition of the working classes in the two countries, he found that the poor, over-taxed English workmen were far behind the labouring class in America. Having satisfied as far as possible the yearnings of his heart, he set sail for America, more reconciled with his new home.

The electors of Manchester invited their representatives, Mr. Bright and Mr. M. Gibson, to a meeting in the Corn Exchange, on the 28th of January, 1856. On this occasion Mr. Bright delivered a long speech.

“The defence of the liberties of Europe,” he remarked, “is a phrase that Lord John Russell used, and which he borrowed from the King’s Speech in the time of William III. (Loud laughter and cheers.) ‘The balance of power’ is another phrase—it is an admirable phrase, it is a phrase no man living has ever understood, that nobody has ever succeeded in defining—it is precisely one of those things that lasts for ever—that is, until you grow wiser, and find that there is nothing whatever in it—like hunting for the philosopher’s stone or perpetual motion, or any of these things, or like having a perpetual trail of hounds that may hunt for ever. . . . We have been living under a government of old, old lords, since 1688. I can tell you, you would not be able to sleep in your beds if those men who manage the affairs of this country were also the managers of your private affairs; but those men who have those titles, having had forefathers of whom we know but little, and that little not to their advantage, must needs be a grand institution of the country and its hereditary governors. I must quote the words of a quaint writer who said: ‘If you would hood an ass in reverend purple, if you would hide his two ambitious ears, he should pass for a cathedral doctor.’ (Loud laughter and cheers.) On the other side of the Atlantic there were no old lords, or new lords either*; but did any one see that the Presidents of the United States, from General Washington down to President Pierce, were not as good rulers as the average of the monarchs of this country or of the rest of Europe? . . . I know very well, and you must know, that there are steeples of Alma in morals as well as on the field of battle—of blood. (Hear, hear.) We must borrow our metaphors from events which pass before us. If I am a political soldier, I strive to maintain the ranks and to confront unflinching all the batteries that ridicule or malice may point against us. (Loud cheers.) I wish to pass on uninfluenced by the baits that seduce and by the temptations that feed ambition. I wish to make a lode-star of my political career; and if I felt what I hold to be just and true, above and beyond the dignity of representing this great city in the Imperial Parliament, I trust I shall not on that account be less worthy of that dignity to which your favour and confidence have raised me.” (Cheers.)

For some time before this date, and while the thousands of graves were growing green in the Crimea, Mr. Bright’s health began to fail through over-exertion and increasing public labour for fifteen years; and the unkind remarks made respecting his upright conduct in opposing the war, as well as misrepresentation, had produced an injurious effect upon his sensitive constitution.

For upwards of two years he opposed the war party almost

* In connection with this statement the reader may be reminded of the mechanic, Whitehead’s contrast between the labouring classes of the two countries.

alone, and during that time he never allowed the most dexterous of his antagonists to gain the slightest advantage over him. He was never betrayed into a rash expression, and never inflamed into unbecoming wrath. He sat, night after night, in the House, for the purpose of taking advantage of any opportunity to try to prevent the further slaughter of his countrymen; and when he rose he gave utterance to eloquence in pathetic and generous appeals, and vigorous and caustic remarks which withered his opponents. He persevered with a manliness which conferred the highest panegyric on his nature, a penetration which placed his ability in the highest point of view, and a confidence in the national character, which nothing but singular nobleness in the heart of a philanthropist could have dictated and sustained.

In later years, in a speech at Birmingham, Mr. Bright said:—

“Well, I cannot forget all that took place on that occasion. There is much of it I wish I could forget. (Hear, hear.) I wish I could forget the slanders that were uttered against me; slanders from many writers of the press, and, I am sorry to say, some of the most bitter were from those people who are supposed to write for the religious newspapers. I should be glad if I could forget that I was at one time hissed and hooted by mobs, and forget, further, a story that I was burnt in effigy by those I was most anxious to serve; and, finally, that in consequence of the course I took on a great public question I lost my seat in Parliament for one of the first constituencies of the kingdom. But I may recollect that, after all, I never lost the sense, and I have not lost it yet, that I did what was my duty to my country, under the trying and the difficult circumstances in which I was placed.” (Applause.)

The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone at the same meeting paid a tribute of respect to Mr. Bright:—

“We ought to be ready,” said Mr. Gladstone, “as my right hon. friend, Mr. Bright, showed himself to be ready at the time of the Crimean war to lay his popularity as a sacrifice—(loud cheers)—upon the altar of his duty, I will not say without a moment of regret, because I am sure that to a man of his feelings and strong sympathies it must have been a matter of regret to find himself less in harmony for a time with the sentiment of that day than he had been theretofore. Perhaps, with many sentiments, many moments of regret, but without one sentiment or one moment of hesitation. (Cheers.) That, in my opinion, is the conduct which beyond all others ennobles the man that pursues it and the country that produces such men. It is not every one who has the opportunity of making such splendid offerings to duty as he did, because it is not every one that can accumulate the stock of public approbation and esteem out of which alone they can be made. But every one of us can, from early life onwards, to some extent imitate such conduct, though we may be content to labour in the dark—content to labour under suspicion, content to labour under reproach, well assured that if we keep the pole-star of duty well fixed in our vision we never shall fail to reach the end which we have in view, as far as it involves the good of the country, and to reach such mode and measure of public approval as may be good and sufficient for ourselves.” (Hear, hear.)

Throughout the war both Liberals and Conservatives denounced the unpopular part taken up by the sturdy representative of Manchester, but he passed through the keen ordeal in the House of Commons with credit, and came out a recognised favourite in that assembly, valued by his friends and respected

by his opponents. In him was seen a magnificent specimen of the Puritan : fervour, devotion, honest indignation, moral fearlessness, uncompromising integrity, were all conspicuous, and unalloyed by hypocrisy.

Mr. Bright wrote a letter to Mr. George Wilson, the chairman of the election committee of Manchester, on the 4th of March, 1856, in which he stated :—

“For fifteen years I have worked chiefly, not had rest, with very little relaxation, and now I discover that the brain has had too much exercise and the body too little. I have been to London twice since the opening of the session, but have found myself quite unable to attend to the House. My medical adviser strongly urges me to give up all attention to business for three months, and spend the time in seeking relief in a Continental journey. I need not tell you how unwilling I am to abandon, even for a short time, the performance of my duties in Parliament; but necessity has no law, and so I submit to what I cannot avoid. My constituents, who for nearly nine years past have been so tolerant with my shortcomings, will, I trust, believe that I have not quitted my post without a sufficient cause. I hope, when peace is made and men’s minds return to matters of home interest, I may yet be able to render some slight service to the public. If I cannot undertake to sustain by force of arms the independence of the Sultan and the liberties of Europe, I may work in a humble sphere to strengthen the liberties and promote the welfare of my own country.”

The Liberal electors of Manchester were called together on the 30th of January, 1857, to consider a communication received from Mr. Bright, offering to resign his seat as member for Manchester on account of his ill health; at the same time he intimated that in the event of his being restored to his former vigour, he intended to present himself again at the next election. Mr. Bright, in a letter dated November 5th, 1856, had stated :—

“I have consulted physicians of extensive practice and eminent in the profession, and their opinions all concur in this, that a complete rest from labour for a longer period is necessary, and that this, it is believed, will give me renewed health and strength. Acting upon this advice, which my own judgment entirely approves, I am about to leave home for some months, and shall therefore in all probability not be able to attend the House of Commons during the next session of Parliament.”

Mr. George Wilson presided, and moved :—

“That this meeting expresses its profound regret at the circumstances which unhappily necessitate the absence of its esteemed representative, Mr. John Bright, and desires to record its unabated confidence in the signal ability and high moral courage, universally acknowledged, with which he has hitherto represented this great metropolis of industry in Parliament; that it hereby begs respectfully to express its admiration of the undeviating consistency and unflinching firmness with which he has adhered to those great principles on which he was elected, as well as its warmest gratitude for the eminent services which he has rendered to the nation; that, while deeply sympathising with him under the serious indisposition which has compelled him to retire for a season from public duties, it derives the sincere satisfaction from the prospect that he will be able ere long to re-enter upon them; and that, while cheerfully conceding to him the interval of repose which may be necessary for the complete restoration of his health, it requests him to allow the continuance of his Parliamentary connection with this city, in the earnest hope that the cause of popular rights, of social progress, and of international concord, may soon regain the assistance of his disinterested and distinguished advocacy in the House of Commons.” (Great cheering.)

Mr. Bazley, in seconding the motion, said :—

"The assiduity with which Mr. Bright has performed his public duties has unfortunately led to failing health, and now in truth has his mind over-worked its tenement of clay. Many years ago he joined a faithful and patriotic band to assist in the repeal of the iniquitous Corn Laws, and from that field of labour he was called upon to enter the House of Commons, where with unceasing zeal he has been a constant advocate of freedom of labour—of the due reward that industry is entitled to, of reform, of education, of peaceful progress, and of any improvement which would promote the solid progress of his fellow-creatures. (Applause.) The Parliamentary career of our member may be traced by his untiring energy—(cheers)—his convincing eloquence, and his undaunted moral and political courage." (Cheers.)

The Right Hon. Milner Gibson, in adding his testimony to that of the previous speakers, said :—

"I will say that whatever may be the opinion of his constituents as to his merits, there is a still more unanimous conviction in the House of Commons upon that subject—(cheers)—where all parties bear testimony to his eloquence and ability, the courage which he has displayed, qualities in which he has few rivals, and none exceed him in that example." (Cheers.)

News was received in London, in January, 1856, that the Czar of Russia had accepted a proposal as a basis for negotiating a treaty of peace, and an armistice was concluded. On the 30th of March the treaty was signed, on the 27th of April the ratifications were exchanged, and thus ended one of the greatest wars in which this country was ever engaged. The number of British soldiers that fell was estimated at 22,000 ; of these about 4,000 died by violence, the remainder having died from diseases brought on by exposure to wet and cold, and by improper food. £50,000,000 was the estimated cost in money to this country, to say nothing of the injury it had done to the foreign and home trade. The only trophies brought back by the soldiers were a few wrecks of the field of battle in the shape of their enemies' cannon, which ornament a few parks in England. Is this experience to be lost on the people of England? What authority have we to mortgage the flesh and bones and sweat of future generations to gratify the insane pugnacity or extravagance of one? Mr. Bright was a strong advocate for peace, because he saw it had triumphs more extensive and important and permanent than those of war—triumphs, not of airy glory, that beggars kingdoms and leaves an insolvent posterity, but that which elevates nations to the loftiest pitch of prosperity—

"Were half the power that fills the world with terror,
Were half the wealth bestowed on camps and courts,
Given to redeem the human mind from error,
There were no need for arsenals and forts."

No doubt a small fraction of the sums which are squandered in needless war would provide complete instruction for the

working people, impart important knowledge useful in their callings, and consistent with the necessity of toiling for a livelihood.

It was a saying of Channing's, that if we would only dress our soldiers in butchers' blouses, the eyes of mankind would at once be opened to the true nature of "glorious war." But even without the help of the butcher's blouse, John Bright has been able to pierce through the scarlet and white and gold trappings of military glory, and see the foul blood-smeared idol beneath. The members of the "Society of Friends" have always protested against this scourge, which has shed rivers of human blood, and whitened the plains and mountain-tops with lines of ghastly bones to bleach under foreign skies, and thus shown themselves some centuries in advance of the rest of the Christian Church—

"But still that line of spectral white
For ever is renewed."

Mr. Bright has many times complained in his speeches of the apathy of the clergy in denouncing war; but perhaps he forgot that some of the more fortunate ones commence life in the dragoons, and finish their probation in the Church. It may be called a redeeming period in such lives when the sword of war is substituted for the sword of the Christian divine, and the justice of the peace. Instead of raising their voices against war, it is, perhaps, natural that these men should look upon it, at least, with a certain degree of favour.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

BRIGHT AND COBDEN UNSEATED.

Death of Mr. Cobden's Son—Mr. Bright Travels on the Continent—Palmerston Defeated in the House by Cobden—The Country Appealed to—Bright, Gibson, and Cobden Unseated—Opinions of the Press—A Farewell Address.

SPRING always cheered the heart of Richard Cobden, and he would be often seen on the terrace walk of his residence at Durnford feeding the birds that flew to him from the neighbouring plantation. Robins followed him about from bush to bush, and sang their lively notes. It was at such a time of the year, in April, 1856, that Mr. Cobden's only son, a promising youth of fifteen, who was at school at Weinheim, suddenly died from an attack of scarlet fever, and was interred very soon after. Mr. Cobden, who was staying in London at the time, was about to sit down with a friend to breakfast at his apartments, when on opening his letters, he learnt not of the illness, but of the actual death and burial of his son. The blow to Mr. Cobden was appalling; and after journeying five hours by rail, he had the sad task of breaking the disastrous tidings to Mrs. Cobden. At first he decided to communicate the news to her gradually, but his haggard and wan appearance as soon as he met her eyes convinced her that he had brought evil tidings which he could no longer conceal; and while his little girls were merry in the drawing-room, he had to retire to his chamber, and there he sat with bowed head and helpless form, and life grew dark. His wife at first could not realise the actual sorrow that had fallen upon them, and devoted her attention to her sorrowing husband. The stupor of grief, however, soon came over her too, and she was transformed as if into marble, and "appeared her own pale monument." Mr. Cobden revived, and was able to administer to her mental suffering; but her recovery from the shock was very slow, and after it had extended over months her hair was perceptibly whitened. This was the loss of their first hope, and their hearts were lone and desolate. Durnford House heard his sighs, and witnessed his solitary communings. Mr. Bright sympathised with them in their sorrow, and he was one who could realise the suffering through which they were passing, and

in his condolence he had said, "that we know but imperfectly what a mother's sufferings are in such a case."

Mr. Bright's health was still in a very weak state, and even in the midst of his grief Mr. Cobden could not shake off the apprehensions of fear:—

"I have had a sort of selfish share in Mr. Bright's career," wrote Mr. Cobden to a friend, "for I have felt as though, when passing the zenith of life, I was handing over every principle and cause I had most at heart to the advocacy of one not only younger and more energetic, but with gifts of natural eloquence to which I never pretended. Perhaps there were never two men who lived in such transparent intimacy of mind as Mr. Bright and myself. Next to the loss of my boy, I have had no sorrow so constant and so great as from his illness. The two together make me feel quite unnerved, and I seem to be always feeling about in my mind for an excuse for quitting the public scene. Bright's loss, if permanent, is a public calamity. If you could take the opinion of the whole House, he would be pronounced, by a large majority, to combine more earnestness, courage, honesty, and eloquence than any other man."

Mr. and Mrs. Cobden retired to a friend's house at Bangor, and Mr. Bright with his family sought the refreshing air of Llandudno in the autumn of this year. Both friends exchanged visits, agreeing that politics should be eschewed for the time being. In March of this year Lord Brougham offered Mr. Bright and his family the occupancy of his villa at Cannes, but at that time the offer was gratefully declined, as the hydropathic establishment at Ben Rhydding was recommended to him as a likely place to recruit his health. After spending two months there, and finding that his health was not much improved by his stay, he visited Scotland, where he spent a short time with Mr. Edward Ellice, M.P. for Coventry, at Glengarry. He next visited Lord Aberdeen, at Haddo House, in Aberdeenshire; and, as his health was not yet robust, in November he went to Algiers, where he stopped a few weeks. He travelled from there to Italy in company with Miss Helen Priestman Bright, his eldest daughter. The Empress of Russia, upon hearing that Mr. Bright had arrived at Nice, in January, requested Baron Meyendorff to wait upon the distinguished Englishman, and to invite him to an interview with her Majesty. Mr. Bright, accompanied by his daughter, waited upon the Empress on New-year's Day, and the interview was very interesting. "I know you have been just to my country," said the Empress to Mr. Bright, who replied that he wished to be, and thought he had been, just to both countries. In further conversation her Majesty remarked that she could not understand why England should have made war upon Russia. Baron Meyendorff was present at the interview, and related to Mr. Bright the loss of his son at Sebastopol, and both were much affected.

Mr. Bright next travelled through Switzerland to Civita Vecchia and Rome, where he sojourned for about two months.

During the absence of Mr. Bright, Mr. Cobden began again to take more interest in politics, and a quarrel which arose in Hong Kong between Sir John Bowring, the governor of Hong Kong, and the Chinese governor, attracted his attention. The Chinese had boarded the *Arrow*, and rescued twelve of their countrymen from it on a charge of piracy. Sir John Bowring protested against malfeasants on board of a British ship being seized, and contended that the lawful course was to make the demand through the consul. Nine of the twelve men were returned without delay, but Sir John gave notice that unless the other three were returned within eight-and-forty hours, with apologies for the past and pledges for the future, he would use physical force. The other three prisoners were accordingly returned, with a protest from the Chinese governor that the *Arrow* was not a British ship; and such was the case, for its licence had expired. The day after the three men were returned Sir John Bowring bombarded the harbour and town, and a great number of Chinese junks were destroyed and part of the town was battered down; and this was the commencement of a costly war.

Mr. Cobden, on the 26th of February, 1856, brought forward the following motion in the House of Commons:—

“That this House has heard with concern of the conflicts which have occurred between the British and Chinese authorities in the Canton river; and without expressing an opinion as to the extent to which the Government of China may have afforded this country cause of complaint respecting the non-fulfilment of the treaty of 1842, this House considers that the papers which have been laid upon the table fail to establish satisfactory grounds for the violent measures resorted to at Canton in the late affair of the *Arrow*, and that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the state of our commercial relations with China.” “I ask, what are the grounds of this devastation and warfare which are now being carried on in the Canton river?” said Mr. Cobden in the course of his speech. “Our plenipotentiary in China alleges that a violation of our treaty rights has taken place in regard to this vessel, the *Arrow*. In the first place, I think that is a question which might have been referred home, before resorting to extreme measures. In the next place, I ask, what is the case, as a question of international law? I will take the opinion of one of the highest legal authorities of the country; for I should, after the statement which I heard made by Lord Lyndhurst in another place on Tuesday evening, think myself very presumptuous if I were to detain you by any statement of my opinions. I heard Lord Lyndhurst declare that, with reference to this case of the *Arrow*, the Chinese Government is right; and I heard him say that, in giving his opinion, he could not do better than use the very words used by the Chinese governor—that this vessel, the *Arrow*, is not in any respect a British vessel.”

The Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson seconded the motion, which was carried by a majority of sixteen, and Lord Palmerston thereupon appealed to the country.

Mr. Bright, on hearing of the defeat of the Government, wrote to Mr. Cobden, stating :—

“ I need not tell you how greatly pleased I was with the news, and especially that the blow was given by your hand.”

Previous to this date Mr. Cobden had decided not to offer himself for re-election for the West Riding, which at that time he was representing—for the reason that his views on education and the Russian war had not been approved by his constituents, and he accepted an invitation to contest Huddersfield.

The committee of the Manchester Liberals held a meeting in the Free-trade Hall, on the 10th of March, to select candidates, and to prepare for the general election. Mr. G. Wilson presided. The Right Hon. Milner Gibson's address, in justification of his recent vote, was listened to with deep attention, and received with loud applause. The absence of Mr. John Bright was felt to be a misfortune ; still, the circumstances of his enforced and most reluctant withdrawal for a short season from public life were of a character to engage the grateful sympathies of a large number of his supporters, and the meeting was unanimous in selecting their late distinguished representatives. The editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, in alluding to a letter received from Mr. Bright, addressed from Rome, wrote thus :—

“ Our absent representative speaks to us on this occasion from classic ground. He has penned his protest on behalf of humanity just in the midst of scenes which once resounded with the eloquence of Cicero, and witnessed the triumphs of the Scipios and the Cæsars. Ages have rolled away since Rome held the sceptre of the civilised world. Her tribunals are empty, her orators are dumb, the heritage of her might has descended to other hands ; but of one great truth Rome stands as the eternal monitor. Her ruins remind us of the evanescence of power when leagued with corruption, wielded by usurpers, and divorced from morality. Nowhere on earth could a British statesman more appropriately remind his countrymen of the perils which wait upon unprincipled aggression, popular sycophancy, and executive despotism.”

Mr. Bright's letter was dated the 8th of March, 1857, and sent from Rome to Mr. G. Wilson.

“ With regard to my health,” wrote Mr. Bright, “ I have found myself sensibly improving from week to week, and from month to month, during the four months I have been absent from England ; and by those with whom I come in contact here, I am supposed to be quite well, as, in reality, I appear to be. Judging from the past and my present condition, I have been indulging a confident expectation that during the present year I should find myself able to remain at home, and to return to my usual occupation ; and that, I think, would be the opinion of my friends and of my medical advisers could they see me now. I do not say that this is certain, but I certainly think it is highly probable. Under these circumstances, then, what ought I to do ? But this is not the whole case. I am away from England and cannot at present return ; and if I could I should not deem it wise for me to encounter any of the turmoil of an election. You have then a double difficulty with me—the supposed uncertainty as to my health, and my absence during the time of the election. Now, allowing all I can, and most for the kindness of my friends, it is not unreasonable that many of them may doubt my early recovery, and others

may think my absence very prejudicial at such a time. Whilst this doubt and my absence may be worked strongly against me by those who have not hitherto shown themselves very magnanimous or scrupulous as to their modes of attack, I have consulted some persons here whom I know, and they are altogether unwilling to entertain the idea that the state of my health now is any sufficient reason why I should withdraw; and I should say the same did not I know how often we are biassed by our wishes in deciding questions in which we are deeply interested. After much consideration I have come to a conclusion, in which, perhaps, nothing is absolutely concluded—for after stating the case fairly I must leave it in other hands. The interests of the constituency—that is of the Liberal majority—and the welfare of the Liberal cause, must in reality decide the question. Don't for a moment even put my feelings, or position, or prospects in the scale against what is best for the interest and reputation of the constituency of Manchester. If there is a wish that I should stand as a candidate at this election, and if it be thought that the something of uncertainty as to my health and my unavoidable absence from England at this moment will not prevent my return if I am brought forward, then I am willing to offer myself for re-election. If, on the contrary, many persons should doubt my being able again to return to public life, and if they should be unwilling that one of their representatives should be so long absent from the House, and if they should show a coldness because I am not present to assist in the contest, and to such an extent as to make the election a difficult and doubtful one, then I think you will do your duty to me and the constituency by not allowing my name to appear. I am sure you will decide for the best, and I shall be entirely satisfied with the result."

Mr. Bright enclosed with his letter an address to the electors, in the event of his friends deciding to bring him forward as a candidate. The committee unhesitatingly decided to present him for re-election, and on the 18th of March there was a meeting in the Free-trade Hall of the Liberal electors of Manchester. Mr. G. Wilson officiated as chairman, and the attendance was very large. The Right Hon. T. M. Gibson addressed those present. Mr. Thomas Bazley moved a vote of thanks to their members of Parliament for their past services, and pledging to use every lawful means to return them again to the House of Commons. Mr. Alderman Watkins seconded the motion, which was carried with only a few dissentients.

Mr. Cobden was present to do duty for his absent friend.

"In his name," said Mr. Cobden, "I thank you in the outset for the kind reception with which you have greeted the mention of his name, and I thank you for the all but unanimous vote with which you have announced his candidature at this election. . . . I have lived with Mr. Bright in the most transparent intimacy of mind that two human beings ever enjoyed together. I don't believe there is a view, I don't believe there is a thought, I don't believe there is one aspiration in the minds of either of us that the other is not acquainted with. I don't know that there is anything that I have sought to do which Mr. Bright would not do in my place, or anything that he aim at which I would not accomplish if I had the power. Knowing him, then, I stand here in all humility as his representative, for what I have long cherished in my friend Mr. Bright is this, that I have seen in him an ability and an eloquence to which I have had no pretensions—(great cheering)—because I am not gifted with the natural eloquence with which he is endowed; and that I have had the fond consolation of hoping that Mr. Bright, being seven or eight years younger than myself, will be advocating principles—and advocating them successfully—when I shall no longer be on the scene of duty. With these feelings I naturally take the deepest interest in the decision of this election. I feel humiliated, I feel disgusted, to see the daily personal attacks, the diatribes that are made against this man (cries of 'shame,' and loud cheers). . . . I will deal very candidly with

you, men of Manchester, in this respect. I say you have not the character, or fame, or the destinies of Mr. John Bright in your hands, but I will tell you this, that your own character and reputation are at stake. Your character and reputation with the country and with the world at large are at stake in the conduct which you pursue on this occasion. One who has served you so faithfully and so assiduously—even to the partial destruction of his own health—who is no longer able to appear before you. Why, the manhood that is in you must all rebel against the cowardly assaults that are made upon him. (Cheers.) You must go to the House of Commons for his character; to either side of the House of Commons, and I will venture to say that you will hear but one opinion from Whig, Tory, or Radical. I will tell you what I heard one of the oldest and most sagacious men in the House of Commons say, that he did not believe that there was any man in the House, with the exception of Mr. Bright and Mr. Gladstone, who ever changed votes by their eloquence. (Hear, hear.) Now that is a great tribute to pay to a man. (Applause.) Because, although we, many of us, may probably convince people by our arguments, we do not convert them and make them change their votes. It requires logic and reasoning power, but it requires something else—it requires those transcendent powers of eloquence which your representative possesses. (Loud cheers.) I am told that this Manchester School, as it is called, do not pay sufficient attention to the interests of Manchester. Now I think we have done as much for Manchester as anybody. Have you not got your daily newspapers now? But for my right hon. friend you might have had to be content with your news three days old. (Cheers.) Have you not got an addition to your register of 4,000 names now? (Cheers.) Who was it that got those 4,000 names added to your register by having a clause inserted in favour of the compound householders? It was Mr. Bright. (Cheers.) No man of less energy or of influence than he could have done it, because it is a thing repugnant to the governing classes in the House of Commons to have any addition to the register at all. (Hear, hear.) Well now, this Manchester School and their getting the Corn Laws repealed and Free-trade established, from which the trade of this country has pretty nearly doubled during the last twelve years—I say, who has benefited so much as Manchester by that?” (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

Mr. Cobden also addressed the electors of Huddersfield on his own candidature, and also visited Salford, and spoke there in the interest of Sir E. Armatage. He again visited Manchester for the purpose of advocating the claims of Mr. Bright; but he was not equal to the toil and excitement of contesting three boroughs, and while a crowded meeting awaited his arrival at the Free-trade Hall, news was received that he had fallen prostrate from sheer exhaustion, and was confined to a bedroom at the “Clarence” Hotel in Manchester.

Sir John Potter and Mr. James Aspinall Turner, eminent merchants of Manchester, and Liberals, acceded to the wishes of a large number of Palmerstonian requisitionists, and came out as candidates. Excitement ran very high. The nomination took place in St. Ann’s Square, in the presence of 20,000 people. The Mayor, Mr. James Watts, presided. Mr. Alderman Watkins first nominated the Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson. Mr. Alderman Mackie seconded the nomination. Mr. Thomas Bazley nominated Mr. John Bright. Mr. Alexander Henry was the seconder. At this stage Dr. John Watts stepped forward to the front of the hustings, and called out, “Bright and complete

suffrage"—(loud cheers); "Bright and short Parliaments." (Great cheering.)

Mr. Alderman Neild next nominated Sir John Potter as a fit representative. Mr. Thomas Fairbairn seconded the nomination. Mr. William Entwisle nominated Mr. James Aspinall Turner, and Mr. John Pender was the seconder.

The Right Hon. T. M. Gibson addressed the immense gathering. Mr. Vaughan, barrister, Mr. John Bright's brother-in-law, spoke on behalf of Mr. John Bright. The two other candidates also delivered addresses. The Mayor declared that the show of hands was in favour of Mr. Bright and Sir John Potter. The election came off the next day, and the supporters of Lord Palmerston's Government achieved a victory, the numbers being :—

Sir John Potter	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	8,368
J. A. Turner	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7,854
The Right Hon. T. M. Gibson	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5,588
John Bright	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	5,458

At four o'clock on the day of the election the Liberals held a meeting in Newall's Buildings. The chair was occupied by Mr. George Wilson, who said that Mr. John Bright was almost the only man the cotton districts had produced who had become foremost, not only in the House of Commons, but in the world; and it was sad to think that Manchester, that had been represented by such men, possessing such ability, and without proving one single accusation against them, or showing that they had deviated the least iota from their principles, such a change should have taken place as they had seen that day. Mr. Jacob Bright, junior, informed those present that he knew, when the telegraph message reached his brother, what feelings it would produce in his mind. There was no man within twenty miles of that city who had a larger sympathy with the population amongst which he was born, and no man who had a purer ambition to promote the interests of that population. He believed he would rather have been the representative of a large constituency in Lancashire than have taken any official position, whatever dignity it might have added to his name. His sorrow would be, not that it had rejected him, but because it seemed for the moment to trample upon his principles.

The cause of the overthrow of Messrs. Gibson and Bright was attributed to a coalition of Conservatives and Palmerstonians against the more advanced Liberals. Lord Palmerston had made the appeal to the country under favourable circumstances, and caught the *aura popularis*, as he had gained much popularity by

the firmness with which he had carried on the Crimean war, and the terms upon which he had brought it to a conclusion. Accounts of frightful atrocities, said to have been committed by the Chinese—such as poisoning the wells, poisoning the bread by the bakers, and murdering Europeans—produced a “tempestuous sea of ignorance to run so rough and high” in his favour. The Conservatives voted almost to a man for Messrs. Potter and Turner, and there had been a considerable defection from the Liberal ranks. In the excitement, the arduous labours of Mr. Bright, which had brought on his illness, were forgotten, and those fickle persons who had been benefited displayed an evanescent gratitude, and assisted in “stoning the prophets.”

Mr. Cobden received only 590 votes, whereas his opponent was favoured with 823. Mr. Miall, too, was thrown out at Rochdale, and Mr. Fox at Oldham; and Lord Palmerston’s success was far beyond expectation. The defeat of Mr. Bright at Manchester was a greater trouble to Mr. Cobden than his own at Huddersfield.

“The time will come,” wrote Mr. Cobden to a friend, “when Manchester will feel the want of a brave heart and an eloquent voice to liberate her from other dangers and other difficulties; then she will feel remorse for her ingratitude to John Bright. . . . As for me, several reasons, personal and domestic, make me long for a rest from public work. I confess, however, that the medicine administered at Huddersfield was a little bitter; but like other remedies, I hope it will do me good.”

It is well worth while here to give extracts from the leading articles of various newspapers as to the opinions they expressed at the time, and we will begin with the leading journal—the *Times*:—“We regret the fate which has overtaken Messrs. Bright and Cobden. Nothing can be more alien to our feelings than to insult those gentlemen with expressions of commiseration when the battle of life has for the moment turned against them; save in so far as for personal and domestic affliction they need not the pity of any man. How many among public men now living have done what they have accomplished? What we now say with regard to Mr. Bright we said when the contest was as yet undecided, and when the constituency of Manchester had not as yet passed upon him a vote of ostracism. With regard to Mr. Cobden, we can only repeat that in our opinion, while he is living and in full possession of all his faculties, no English House of Commons will be complete without him. For ten years we have opposed these two gentlemen in well nigh every act of their public lives, and yet now we must honestly say that we deeply regret to see erased from the roll-call of the House of Commons the names of Mr. John Bright and Mr. Richard Cobden.”

"Well, Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bright," wrote the editor of the *Morning Post*, "who have been so long before the public as connected with the Anti-Corn-Law League, and the latter of whom is a man of eminent ability as a debater, have both lost their seats by numerous majorities, even though they were supported by the hustling oratory of Mr. Cobden."

"In the great work Mr. Cobden sacrificed his fortune," stated the editor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, "and Mr. Bright undermined the most sacred part of his health. Grateful people compensated the first—the reward of the latter has been a vote of censure, whilst the object of it is seeking in Rome to restore the balance of a great intellect, overworked in the public cause. Passing from the fables of history, the authentic annals of the world hardly afford a more shameless instance of ingratitude than Manchester presented on Saturday last. Mr. Bright's principles had undergone no change; a Quaker, he was a man of peace from first to last. In the Chinese debate he took no part, and the excuse of his being unable to attend to his duty was answered by anticipation, when he wrote that in a short time his health would be perfectly restored. From the odium of this election our neighbours will never escape."

"Mr. John Bright, the greatest living orator," so ran the leading article of the *Edinburgh Daily Express*, "the most conscientious of public men, twice returned triumphantly for Manchester, after wasting his health and perilling his life in the people's cause, is placed at the foot of the poll, upwards of 2,000 votes under Mr. Aspinall Turner, a Conservative. Lastly, Mr. Thomas Milner Gibson, the consummate tactician, the accomplished and amiable gentleman, the unswerving Liberal, who perilled his fortune and the favour of his friends by adhesion to his principles, the man who, despising the honours of office and the prejudice of class, has devoted his energies to promote measures that would benefit the masses of the people, has now, after representing Manchester for sixteen years, been turned out in favour of Sir John Potter, a gentleman never heard of beyond Manchester, save by his mercantile friends."

"The town which has worn with such effect so great a fame in the electoral field," wrote the editor of the *Daily News*, "now sinks back into insignificance, preferring local thrift to the world-wide honour of being represented by the most distinguished men in Parliament, and in that insignificance Manchester may be left for the present, while others draw the moral which is yielded by the defeat of the peace party in all directions."

"There is no single man to whom Manchester owes more than to Mr. John Bright," declared the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*, "nor is there any man whose continued exclusion from the House we should more deeply regret. At the present moment, however, this unexpected relief from Parliamentary duties may be of great advantage to the health of one of the most illustrious champions of Free-trade, of one of our ablest orators, and of one of the most independent representatives who has ever had a seat in the House of Commons."

"The result of the Manchester election," it was stated in the leading article of the *Edinburgh Review*, "will be received with regret by every one who respects great talent, allied to thorough uprightness, earnestness, and consistency. The exclusion of such a man as Mr. Bright from the House of Commons is a national loss. No doubt the business of the country will go on as usual. The House of Commons will meet, and debate, and divide, and vote the supplies, and perform all its functions just the same as before, and the *Times* will report it all each morning; but as we read over the dreary columns of aimless talk by men of no name, we shall miss the glowing eloquence of the man who never spoke but to forward the cause of truth and justice, and never ceased without having added something to the glory and fame of the assembly of which he was a member. What the country has lost in John Bright may be estimated if we could only imagine the House of Commons stripped of all its great actors and its tried leaders. What a miserable, helpless, and uninfluential body it would be. Its character would invite contempt, and offer a premium to encroachment upon popular rights. The people would be judged by their representatives, and treated accordingly."

"When, in 1843, Mr. John Bright was elected for Durham," stated the editor of the *The Commonwealth*, "he announced the principles upon which his conduct as a member of the British Senate should be based. Throwing aside party considerations, he should support measures of improvement from whatever quarter they might come. The effect of this policy upon both of the great sections of the House of Commons is manifest in the obvious relief with which their organs speak, now that they fancy themselves rid of the disturbing element which, during the last fifteen years, so perplexed their calculations. Before the rise of the Manchester School, we had men in Parliament who were above being seduced by the blandishments of power—men who made the people's cause their own; but they were for the most part isolated, acting alone,

without any sort of combination. The natural result was that their solitary protests were unheeded, and they were utterly unable to leave any impression of their opinions upon the policy of the State. We also have had demagogues who were capable by their extreme views and sonorous oratory of kindling the enthusiasm of the country, but never until the rise of the Manchester men had we a party capable at once of rousing the nation and commanding the ears of the Senate. Such a party is much too valuable to be permitted to pass away. It will one day be wanted quite as much as at any former time."

"Had any member of the last Parliament been asked to name the six foremost men of that assembly," declared the editor of the *Birmingham Daily Press*, "the name of Mr. John Bright would have been one of the six. He was foremost in oratory, and, better still, in singleness of purpose, straightforwardness of speech, and thorough conscientious honesty. We could not agree with him on all points, but when most we disagreed we could not for a moment withhold from him our profound respect; yet this is the man whom, when worn out for a while in the service, the electors of Manchester have dismissed to make the way for some local gentleman, a decent kind of man in his way, no doubt, but still a mediocrity."

"The electors of Manchester have exercised their undoubted right of dismissing, as to them seem good, one set of representatives and replacing them by another," observed the editor of the *Liverpool Northern Daily Times*, "and yet we feel that they have acted with something like ingratitude to one who had served them with such distinguished ability so faithfully and so well. The whole country listened to Manchester, through their two eminent and able representatives—Messrs. Gibson and Bright. No one has shown himself more able to sound the war clarion when an onslaught was to be made on some great abuse of Church and State. The amount of labour Mr. Bright has gone through must have been quite prodigious, and no wonder that brain and health have been impaired. We trust that this will only be for a time, and that he will rise up like a giant refreshed with sleep, and again gird himself to the combat with political and spiritual wickedness in high places."

The *Saturday Review* declared that "In Bright, Parliament has lost one of its aptest scholars and brightest ornaments, and these are not times in which such losses are easily repaired. The great danger to our institutions is to be looked for in the deterioration of the character and ability of their representative body. It may be very convenient for an administration to rule with

undisputed sway over submissive mediocrities; but if the standard of ability in the House of Commons should ever be permanently degraded in public estimation, the end of Parliamentary government will not be far off."

"The great and distinctive feature of this general election, however, were it in want of feature, is the signal defeat suffered by the Manchester School;" thus commented the editor of the *Dublin University Magazine*. "It exists in Parliament, as a school, no longer. Neither Cobden, Bright, nor Milner Gibson has a seat. There are hundreds of men who rejoice over this defeat who forget the stout Leaguers in the opponents of the Crimean war, and who really and truly believe that the exclusion of Cobden and Bright from the House of Commons is a gain to the country. The error and the gross injustice of this verdict on the lives of two public men commands a protest from all who can approach the public ear. The question is not whether we agree or disagree with the opinion of these two Free-trade champions; but whether or not they accomplished the greatest change ever effected in the commercial principles of the country; whether this change has been found good or bad, and whether this great work entitles them to a voice in the legislative assembly of this country; and surely no measure of this century has been so popular as that which the Manchester School forced upon Sir Robert Peel. Yet in the midst of a wondrous prosperity, which most men and all commercial men accomplished by the triumph of Free-traders, the two foremost champions of free commerce are summarily expelled the House of Commons. But we are bound to say, strongly as we differ from the late policy of these great Manchester twins, that neither their honour nor their motives are assailable, and that the men who have been returned in their stead can no more be compared to them than the Bushman can be ranked with a Briton. The country has failed in its gratitude."

"A few words spoken or unspoken, a little trimming at the right time, a degree of suppleness on great questions which is often set down as prudence," wrote the editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, "would have sufficed to ensure him (Mr. Bright) the undisturbed enjoyment of popularity. True to the instincts of a noble nature he has chosen a different career. He refused to evade difficulties; he has not flattered by word or act when he knew full well that everything which usually gratifies ambition was at stake. . . . He has maintained the same uncompromising independence towards great and small, ministers and people, the blandishments of aristocratic favour, and the

acclamation of the populace. Yet his heart has not been destitute of ambition. Yes, his was the pure ambition to check the abuses of the executive, to urge a righteous and beneficent policy upon the Government, to stand forth as the dauntless champion of the rights of the people, to infuse into our dealings with other nations that justice and that generosity which alone becomes a Christian State, and to harmonise the interests of England with what is due to the welfare and progress of mankind. He has never deviated a hair's breadth from the accomplishment of these objects. . . . The man whom God endows with the gifts of commanding intellect, noble susceptibilities, and persuasive eloquence, has a sacred trust committed to him which none of the accidents of life can set aside."

While staying at Florence, Mr. Bright wrote his farewell address to the electors of Manchester, on the 31st of March, 1857.

"Gentlemen,—I have received a telegraph despatch informing me of the result of the election contest in which you have been engaged. That result has not greatly surprised me, and so far as I am personally concerned—inasmuch as it liberates me from public life in a manner which involves on my part no shrinking from any duty—I cannot seriously regret it. I lament it on public grounds, because it tells the world that many amongst you have abandoned the opinions you professed to hold in the year 1847, and even so recently as in the year 1852. I believe that slander itself has not dared to charge me with having forsaken any of the principles, on the honest support of which I offered myself twice, and was twice accepted, as your representative. The charge against me has rather been that I have too warmly and too faithfully defended the political views which found so much favour with you at the two previous elections. If the change in the opinion of me has arisen from my course on the question of the war with Russia, I can only say that on a calm review of all the circumstances of the case—and during the past twelve months I have had ample time for such a review—I would not unsay or retract any one of the speeches I have spoken, or erase from the records of Parliament any one of the votes I have given upon it, if I could thereby reverse the decision to which you have come, or secure any other distinction which is in the power of my countrymen to confer. I am free, and will remain free, from any share in the needless and guilty bloodshed of that melancholy chapter in the annals of my country. I cannot, however, forget that the leaders of the opposition in the recent contest have not been influenced by my conduct on this question. They were less successful, but not less bitter, in their hostility in 1852, and even in 1847, when my only public merit or demerit consisted in my labours in the cause of Free-trade. On each occasion calling themselves Liberals, and calling their candidates Liberals also, they have coalesced with the Conservatives, whilst now, doubtless, they have assailed Mr. Gibson and myself on the ground of a pretended coalition with the Conservatives in the House of Commons. I have esteemed it a high honour to be one of your representatives, and have given more of mental and physical labour to your services than was just to myself. I feel it scarcely less an honour to suffer in the cause of peace, and on behalf of what I believe to be the true interests of the country,—though I could have wished that the blow had come from other hands, and at a time when I could have been present to meet face to face those who dealt it. In taking my leave of you and of public life, let me assure you that I can never forget the many—the innumerable—kindnesses I have received from my friends amongst you. No one will rejoice more than I shall in all that brings you prosperity and honour; and I am not without a hope that, when a calmer hour shall come, you will say of Mr. Gibson and of me, that as colleagues in your representation for ten years, we have not sacrificed our principles to gain popularity, or bartered our independence for the emoluments of office or the favours of the great. I feel we have stood for the rights and interests and freedom of the people, and that we have not tarnished the honour or lessened the renown of your eminent city.

"I am now, as I have hitherto been, very faithfully yours,

"JOHN BRIGHT."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MEMBER FOR BIRMINGHAM.

Explanation of the Defeat—Utterances in favour of International Arbitration—
The Indian Mutiny—Mr. Bright returns Home—Invited to Contest Birmingham
—Consents—Again returned to the House of Commons.

THE tone of the foregoing letter leads one to think that at this time Mr. Bright's faith in the public had been somewhat shaken, for he had over-estimated the esteem of those who are of all beings the most subject to change; but he remembered those of his admirers whose opinions were uniform and fixed, and not built upon sandy foundations, and to them he looked for approbation for his past services. Still, he had intended to retire into private life, which would have been a great calamity in more respects than one, for his useful public services would have been lost, and the House of Commons deprived of one of its greatest orators; but

“He was not for himself alone designed,
But born to be of use to all mankind.”

He shared the fate of public favourites, and experienced that there is an ebb as well as a tide in the affairs of public men. This was a favourable moment, too, for forming a real estimate of his merits, when the first glowing sunshine of success had been sobered down by some clouds of neglect, and he came out of the criticism he went through revered and beloved, for he had stood upon the vantage ground of truth, humanity, and duty, which is a trophy nobler than the conqueror's sword. He had laboured for the prosperity of England and the good of mankind, and had endeavoured to save the nation from the shame and guilt of the Crimean war; but he was hooted and yelled at in the crowded streets of the ungrateful city for whose inhabitants he had worked hard. His bosom friend sympathised with him, and assuring him that in the future there would be a prolonged peace, and that the English people in time would see the folly of war, made sunshine in his heart when all was gloom around. The experience he gained was of great value, for it enabled him to look no longer at everything through the genial atmosphere of his own existence, but to grow more literal—not only to feel the warmth of summer, but the winter's cold as well.

He was in his retirement, however, cheered by the tone of the

still small voice which comes out of futurity, assuring him that the storm will pass away, and the sun shine forth. It was a triumph of moral principle over the love of popular applause. And he was a greater man when public meetings would not listen to him because he advocated peace than when he stood on the very pinnacle of fame after having assisted to break the fetters of monopoly. It was Mr. Bright's happy destiny to be permitted to outlive this time of trial, and to occupy again a supreme place in the esteem and affection of his countrymen.

Many years after, Mr. Bright said in one of his speeches :—

"I do not know why I differed from other people so much, but sometimes I have thought it happened from the education I had received in the religious sect with which I am connected. We have no creed which monarchs and statesmen and high priests have written out for us. Our creed, so far as we comprehend it, comes pure and direct from the New Testament. We have no thirty-seven Articles to declare that it is lawful for Christian men, at the command of the civil magistrate, to wear weapons and to serve in wars—which means, of course, and was intended to mean, that it is lawful for a Christian man to engage in any part of the world, in any cause, at the command of a monarch, or of a prime minister, or of a parliament, or of a commander-in-chief, in the slaughter of his fellow-men, whom he might never have seen before, and from whom he had not received the smallest injury, and against whom he had no reason to feel the smallest touch of anger or resentment. Now, my having been brought up as I was would lead me naturally to think that going 3,000 miles off, for it is nearly as far as that by sea, to carry on the war with Russia in the Crimea, was a matter that required very distinct evidence to show that it was lawful, or that it was in any way politic or desirable. Well, I studied the Blue Books with great care. I had at that time the advantage of constant daily and hourly communication with our lamented friend Mr. Cobden, of whom I say not too much when I say that no man in our time has shown greater sagacity than he did on this question, and that no man was a wiser counsellor to a private friend, as I was—to a Government or a nation—than he was during the whole course of his political life. Well, I came to the conclusion—it was impossible that I should come to any other—that the war of 1854, not only upon the principle of sect, but upon the ordinary principles of all moral and Christian men, was unnecessary, that it was impolitical, and that it was unjust."

While sojourning at Venice, on the 16th of April, 1857, Mr. Bright wrote again to Mr. Cobden, and stated :—

"I have been intending to write to you from day to day since I received your letter. It was most refreshing to me to read it, although its topics were not of the most pleasing, but it came at the right time, and it said the right thing, and was just such as I needed. In the sudden break-up of the 'School' of which we have been the chief professors, we may learn how far we have been, and are, ahead of the public opinion of our time. We purpose not to make a trade of politics, and not to use as may best suit us the ignorance and the prejudices of our countrymen for our own advantage, but rather to try to square the policy of the country with the maxims of common sense and of a plain morality. The country is not yet ripe for this, but it is far nearer being so than at any former period; and I shall not despair of a revolution in opinion which shall within a few years greatly change the aspect of affairs with reference to our foreign policy. During the comparatively short period since we entered public life, see what has been done. Through our labours mainly the whole creed of millions of people, and of the statesmen of our day, has been totally changed on all the questions which affect commerce, and customs duties, and taxation. They now agree to repudiate as folly what, twenty years ago, they accepted as wisdom. Look again at our colonial policy. Through the labours of Molesworth, Roebuck, and Hume, more recently supported by us, and by Gladstone,

every article in the creed which directed our colonial policy has been abandoned, and now men actually abhor the notion of undertaking the government of the colonies; on the contrary, they give to every colony that asks for it a Constitution as democratic as that which exists in the United States. Turn to the question of Parliamentary Reform. 'Finality' stoutly repudiated, not by Lord John Russell alone, but by the Tories. I observe that at the recent elections, Tories have repeatedly admitted that there must be Parliamentary Reform, and that they will not oppose a moderate dose of it; and I suppose something before long will be done, not so real as we wish, but something that will make things move a little. But if on commercial legislation, on colonial policy, on questions of suffrage—and I might have added on questions of Church, for a revolution in opinion is apparent there also—we see this remarkable change, why should we despair of bringing about an equally great change in the sentiments of the people with regard to foreign affairs? Palmerston and his press are at the bottom of the excitement that has lately prevailed; he will not last long as Minister or as man. I see no one ready to accept his mantle when it drops from him. Ten years hence, those who live so long may see a complete change on the questions on which the public mind has been recently so active and so much mistaken. This is bringing philosophy to comfort us in our misfortunes, you will say, and does not mend the present; and it is true enough; but it is just the line of reasoning, I doubt not, which has presented itself to your mind when free from the momentary vexation caused by recent events. I am the least unfortunate of our small section, for a year of idleness and of ill-health has made absence from Parliament familiar to me, and I have contemplated resigning my seat since the beginning of 1856. Personally, therefore, to be out is neither strange nor unpleasant, and I am surprised how very little I have cared about the matter on my own account. I hope you can feel somewhat as I do—conscious that we are ostracised because our political creed is in advance of, and our political morality higher than, that of the people for whom we have given up the incessant labour of nearly twenty years. Time will show, and a long time will not be needed to show, the hollowness of the imposture which now rules. Its face may be of brass, but its feet are of clay. It is strange after so much experience that we should be disappointed that opinion goes on so slowly. We have taught what is true in our 'School,' but the discipline was a little too severe for the scholars. Disraeli will say he was right; we are hardly of the English type, and success, political and personal success, cannot afford to reject the use which may be made of ignorance and prejudice among a people. This is his doctrine, and with his views it is true; but as we did not seek personal objects it is not true of us. If we are rejected for peace and for truth, we stand higher before the world and for the future than if we mingled with the patient mediocrities which compose the present Cabinet. I hope the clouds may break, and that sunshine may come again."

Mr. Samuel Morley, M.P., has collected several striking utterances in favour of international arbitration. They include the following: President Grant, on his return to America, after his voyage round the world, used these words: "Though I have been trained as a soldier and participated in many battles, there never was a time when, in my opinion, some way could not be found of preventing the drawing of the sword. I look forward to an epoch when a great recognised Committee of Nations will settle international differences instead of keeping large standing armies as they do in Europe." And the Secretary of State under President Hayes said: "It is the deliberate purpose of this Administration to arbitrate every case of difficulty or difference that may arise between this country and any other." Mr. Gladstone said upon one occasion: "The proposal to submit international differences to arbitration is in itself a very great triumph—a powerful engine on behalf of civilisation and

humanity." Earl Russell said: "On looking at all the wars that have been carried on during the last century, and examining into the causes of them, I do not see one of these wars in which, if there had been a proper temper between the parties, the questions in dispute might not have been settled without recourse to arms." The Marquis of Ripon, in reference to the Treaty of Washington, said: "You have here, in a public instrument between two great countries, the first important consecration—absolutely the first consecration as far as I know—of the great principle that nations, like men, are bad judges of their own quarrels. I believe in that treaty may be found principles which, if I do not deceive myself, are likely to have a large influence in the cause of the greatest of earthly blessings—the cause of peace." Mr. Morley himself adds: "I have great pleasure in expressing my deep sympathy with the work of the Peace Society. I have had the privilege of more than once expressing my adherence to its principles, besides being a subscriber to its funds. I do hope that great success will attend its efforts."

Mr. Bright experienced but a brief leisure from public cares, for while staying at Geneva, in May, 1857, a public meeting, held in Ardwick, sent him an expression of goodwill, giving an opinion as to the result of the Manchester and Huddersfield elections, and their determination to agitate for reform, free trade, and retrenchment. Mr. Bright, in the course of his reply, wrote:—

"I lose no time in replying to say I am very glad to find that in your town the cause of reform, free trade, and retrenchment has so many warm friends, and that you have understood and approved the policy which Mr. Cobden, Mr. M. Gibson, and myself have supported in the House of Commons. On the question of Free-trade little progress has been made for some years past. As to retrenchment, the word has become almost obsolete, and the military expenditure of the country is now nearly double the amount which the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel thought necessary in 1835, although we have no more territory to defend, and although a large army is no longer necessary to maintain tranquillity in Ireland. As to Reform, whilst almost everybody professes to be in favour of it in some shape, the preparation of the particular Bill to be brought forward next year is left in the hands of a minister whose hostility to every proposition for Reform since the year 1832 is notorious and undeniable. Whether on these three points, to which your resolutions refer, the country is in a satisfactory position I must leave the friends of free trade, reform, and retrenchment to decide; and with regard to the promised reform, let me warn you to look more to the question of the franchise than to the other arrangement of the measure. It would be easy to double the number of electors, and at the same time increase the aristocratic influence in Parliament. To give votes, without giving representation in some fair degree in proportion to the votes, is to cheat the people; to give a large number of votes without security of the ballot will subject the increased numbers of our countrymen to the degrading influence which wealth and power now exercise so unscrupulously upon the existing electoral body."

Mr. Cobden was disgusted with the treatment Mr. Bright

had received from the electors of Manchester, and in a letter to a friend stated that "they (the inhabitants of Manchester) are mainly indebted to Mr. Bright for the prosperity which has converted a majority into little better than Tories, and now the base snobs kick away the ladder." Mr. Cobden retired to his quiet home in West Sussex, and for nearly two years could not be induced to enter again the public arena of politics.

In the month of May, news arrived that the Sepoys, or native army of British India, had mutinied. Expressions of discontent had been noticed by the British residents for some time before, and although General Napier had protested, as far back as 1851, against the management of the Bengal native army, which he foretold would lead to evil results, the Government had not taken any steps to remedy the evils complained of. The causes of the outbreak were attributed to religious and ambitious motives, but the want of a thorough sympathy and good understanding between British officers and native soldiers was one chief cause that made others formidable. The whole military force available in British India could hardly be estimated as amounting to more than about half a million of men—a small body to hold in subjection territories inhabited by one hundred and eighty millions of people. Even of that force a very small minority consisted of Englishmen, and these were thinly scattered over a vast area. However, troops were sent from home, and gradually the mutiny was suppressed, and those of the leaders who had been most active in fomenting the rebellion were blown from the mouths of cannon. Under the moderate and circumspect government of Lord Canning the insurrection was brought to a close, and order restored throughout India.

A month later, on the 16th of June, 1857, Mr. Bright arrived in London, and at once made his way to Rochdale, much improved in health, and his neighbours gathered round him, and greeted their friend again. His workpeople were so grateful for his return in health and strength that they hoisted a flag over the mills, with an inscription upon it—"Long life to John Bright, Esq." For only a short time was Mr. Bright permitted to enjoy retirement, and his seclusion was interrupted by a deputation from Birmingham, pressing him to consent to become a nominee for their borough.

On Saturday, August 1st, 1857, a meeting of Liberals was held in Birmingham, to select a candidate to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. G. F. Muntz. Mr. Hodgson, the

ex-mayor, presided. Mr. Alderman Lloyd expressed himself of opinion that Mr. Bright was of that courageous and manly disposition that peculiarly fitted him to become their representative. Mr. Bright was well versed in national and foreign affairs, and as there was no man in the House of Commons who had given so much attention to the affairs of England's great tributary, India, his counsel would be especially valuable at the present crisis. He placed the name of Mr. Bright before that meeting as that of a man whose election would do them honour. Mr. Alderman Manton seconded the proposition. Mr. Councillor Stinton opposed Mr. Bright's election. He gave him credit for possessing wonderful talent, great energy, and thorough honesty, but he did not believe that Birmingham would return any gentleman who entertained those peace crotchets possessed by Mr. Bright. After further discussion it was decided to adjourn the subject to the evening meeting.

Mr. Alderman Hodgson again presided at the evening meeting. Mr. J. S. Wright informed those present that on one occasion Lord John Russell, in the middle of a great speech, had stopped to utter his profound regret that the master mind of Mr. John Bright was not in the House of Commons to enlighten them with his counsels. In Reform matters Mr. Bright was suitable for the electors of Birmingham. Mr. Bright would extend the suffrage, and give an enlightened and strong support to the noble principle of civil and religious liberty. At this crisis in Indian affairs Mr. Bright was much wanted in the House, and if there was any man fully capable of contributing to the real glory of the British people, who would develop the resources and energies of the Indian Empire, and raise the sleeping capacities of the Hindoo, that man was Mr. John Bright, and they would do themselves an honour by electing him their representative. Mr. Alderman Manton seconded the proposition moved by the previous speaker, that Mr. John Bright should represent Birmingham in Parliament. Mr. Dalziel contended that Mr. Bright would not be a suitable member for Birmingham, as their trading interests depended upon war, and he proposed Mr. Joshua Walmsley. Mr. B. Hill opposed the election of both candidates, and proposed Mr. William Mathews. Mr. Mytton admitted that he knew no nobler being than Mr. John Bright, but they could not expect Mr. Bright to aid in promoting the gun trade. Mr. George Harrison reminded those present that a few years before that date Mr. Bright delivered a speech in the Birmingham Town Hall upon India, and he remembered the great

knowledge displayed on that occasion, and he firmly believed that if some of his warnings had been duly attended to that dreadful calamity in India might have been averted. It was ultimately decided to call a public meeting on the following Tuesday evening, when the matter was to be settled.

Upwards of 8,000 persons were present at the meeting on the Tuesday evening, in the Town Hall. Mr. William Lucy occupied the chair. Mr. George Edmunds moved that Mr. Bright be their representative; Mr. Alderman Manton seconded the motion. Mr. T. A. Attwood proposed Mr. Webster; Mr. J. Goodman seconded the motion. Mr. Councillor Holland reminded those present that the following year they were to have a new Reform Bill, and when Lord Palmerston brought it forward was Mr. Webster capable of discussing such a measure? If Lord Palmerston proposed a dribbling and miserable extension of the suffrage, Mr. Bright would be the man to oppose such a measure. Mr. Alderman Lawde supported the claim of Mr. Webster. Mr. M. A. Dalziel stated that he had examined minutely the political character of Mr. Bright, and he found that Mr. Bright had done some excellent things, and had accomplished, during his Parliamentary career, what would send his name with honour to future generations; but, notwithstanding all that, he maintained that Mr. Bright was not the man to represent Birmingham. The man who had for fourteen years fought the battle of democracy, and almost single-handed, was Mr. George Dawson. That gentleman possessed youth on his side, and brilliant talents, and everything requisite to make a senator. Mr. George Dawson came forward, and said he was unable to stand as a candidate. It was his opinion that Mr. Bright was the only man on whom there was any chance of their agreeing. He differed from Mr. Bright respecting the Russian war, and also on some other questions, but these differences would not incline him to prefer a mere respectable Birmingham man, untried in politics, and who had done little service, to a man who was foremost in the House of Commons, and who was one of the most straightforward and honest of Englishmen. He was not the one to oppose such a man. A forest of hands was held up in favour of Mr. Bright, and only a few for Mr. Webster. The Conservatives brought forward Mr. McGreachy in their interest.

Mr. Bright, after being waited upon by a deputation, accepted the decision of the public meeting, and issued his address, in the course of which he stated:—

"There is another question which at this moment occupies and absorbs public attention—the revolt in India. Whilst I deplore this terrible event, along with the rest of my countrymen, I am perhaps less surprised at it than most of them are. For twelve years I have given great attention to the subject of India. I have twice brought it before Parliament, once in moving for a select committee, and once in moving for a Royal Commission of inquiry; and I took an active part in the debates on the Bill recently passed to continue the powers of the East India Company, and attended public meetings in several of our large cities with a view to excite public interest in the great question of the government of India. The success of the insurrection would involve anarchy in India, unless some great man, emerging from the chaos, should build up a new empire, based on, and defended by, military power. I am not prepared to defend the steps by which England has obtained dominion in the East; but, looking to the interests of India and of England, I cannot oppose such measures as may be deemed necessary to suppress the existing disorder. To restore order to India is a mercy to India; but heavy will be the guilt of our countrymen should we neglect hereafter any measure which would contribute to the welfare of its hundred millions of population. I hope the acts of the Government will be free from the vindictive and sanguinary spirit which is shown in many of the letters which appear in the newspapers, and that when the present crisis is over, all that exists of statesmanship in England will combine to work what good is possible out of so much evil."

Mr. Bright, on account of the state of his health, did not visit Birmingham at that time. Every hour the canvass proceeded showed, however, that he was a great favourite with the electors, and that he would be returned by an immense majority. The friends of both the other candidates, ascertaining that such would be the result, wisely withdrew their candidates, and on 10th of August, 1857, Mr. Bright was returned for Birmingham. Mr. John Ratcliff, the mayor, was the returning officer. Mr. Alderman Lloyd nominated Mr. John Bright, and Mr. George Edmunds seconded the nomination.

Mr. Duncan McLaren, at that time ex-Provost of Edinburgh, and brother-in-law of Mr. Bright, said that Mr. Bright was staying at his house when the telegraph despatch came, and he proposed to accompany Mr. Bright to Tamworth, to meet some of the gentlemen from Birmingham. He offered, on behalf of his absent relative, his grateful thanks for the great honour they had done him. Mr. Bright's medical advisers had stated that, although he appeared to be pretty well, and although he could read and speak as well as ever he did in his life, he must give his brain at least two years' repose before he ventured into any kind of excitement, and they laid down a strict injunction that not only should he refrain from public speaking, but he should not appear at a public meeting, where exciting circumstances might occur. Eighteen months of that period had now elapsed, and the two years would expire before he could be called upon to take his seat in Parliament; and it was his firm belief, and Mr. Bright's own hope, that when Parliament assembled he would be able to take his place to advocate their interests in the House of Commons. When Mr. Bright came to Tamworth,

he wrote the address which they had all read. Mr. Bright retired into a private room for about three-quarters of an hour, and returned with four slips (which made above half a column in the newspapers), which bore the marks of scarcely any alterations; and when the address was read to his friends there was not one suggestion or alteration of a single syllable. He doubted very much if any election address to any constituency was ever prepared so quickly and altered so little, for it was not altered even to the extent of one word. They had, therefore, in that address his spontaneous, undisguised opinions. Mr. Bright came forward with no apology, with no retractions, with no expression of sorrow, and with no promise of amendment; but he came forward, saying that as he had been advocating his country's interests and the rights of the working classes, and was the supporter of good legislation of every kind, so he would continue honestly to advocate the views which he believed to be right, whether they should be consonant or not with popular opinions of the day.

During Mr. Bright's involuntary seclusion every scrap of news that could be gleaned of him was eagerly inserted in the newspapers, and the public read it with more than usual interest, for he lived in the endeared recollections of thousands of his countrymen, and his vacant place in the House of Commons they felt as a reproach. The people began to appreciate his views and spontaneously gather round the man who had so recently incurred public disapprobation; for they discovered that he was an honest politician who was not clamorous for the applause of the world, but anxious only for the silent satisfaction which results from having acted well.

Birmingham was honoured in those services which it rendered to the nation in the election of Mr. Bright, for its distinguished representative was universally acknowledged to be a leading statesman, who would not be carried away by "every wind of doctrine;" and much was expected from him. In fact, Mr. Bright's admirers anticipated for him, and for the cause with which he allied himself, a future of glorious and lasting results. His constituents looked forward with interest to his visit to Birmingham.

On the 2nd December, 1857, Mr. Bright found that he would not be able, from due regard to his health, to take his seat until after Christmas, and he therefore wrote to Mr. Alderman Lloyd, the chairman of the election committee, announcing this fact, and adding:—

"Two years ago, when the Indian Bill was about to come under discussion, I

thought I knew something of India, and felt that I could give advice on the subject, but the scene has totally changed, and what was easy to be done in fair weather may be impossible, or of little avail, when the storm rages. I presume, however, that the days of the Leadenhall Street rulers of India are numbered. Without character, without power, it required but a vote of Parliament to give legal effect to that which, I believe, the public opinion of England has already decreed. If the coming session shall establish the government of India on a secure and wise basis, so far as that is possible in the unnatural position in which we stand to that country, I shall feel that Parliament has not laboured in vain, and if the threatened postponement of the Reform Bill is a disappointment to me and others, I shall endeavour to console myself with the hope that the improvement of our representation will hereafter be entrusted to more friendly hands than those that now administer the affairs of the country."

Mr. Milner Gibson was returned for Ashton-under-Lyme on the 12th of December, 1857, by a majority of 134. His opponent was considered eccentric.

On the 2nd of February, 1858, about 5,000 persons assembled in Birmingham to consider the subject of Reform. The Mayor presided. Mr. Bright was not able to attend, so he sent a letter, in which he stated:—

"If your great city, with its great constituency, is only to send two men to Parliament, whilst an equal population and property in some other part of the kingdom is to send twenty men to Parliament, then I say that the franchise is of little avail. . . . Any Reform Bill which is worth a moment's thought, or smallest effort to carry it, must at least double—and it ought to do more than double—the representation of the metropolitan boroughs of the great cities of the United Kingdom. (Cheers). . . . With regard to the ballot, it is worthy of remark that no meeting has been held for many years in favour of Reform at which the ballot has not been strongly insisted on. If Reform is to be granted to gratify and content Reformers, if their judgment and unanimity are sufficient to justify or to force its concession, then surely the ballot cannot be denied to us, but I feel certain it will not long be refused."

(Three enthusiastic cheers were given in favour of their distinguished representative.)

Mr. Bright, a few days after, presented to the House of Commons a petition, which had been sent to him from the Reform meeting at Birmingham. The petition sought to obtain a vote for every ratepayer in boroughs, to establish a £10 franchise in counties, and to effect a more equitable arrangement of the representation. It also advocated vote by ballot, triennial Parliaments, and the abolition of the property qualification of members.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RETURN TO ACTIVE LIFE.

Defeat of Lord Palmerston—A New Conservative Ministry—The Powers of the East India Company Abolished—The French Scare again—Mr. Bright introduced to his Constituents—His Appeal for Parliamentary Reform—His Review of the Past—Invited to Prepare a Reform Bill—Visits his Old Constituents—At Edinburgh, Glasgow, &c.—Amongst his Fellow-Townsmen—Disraeli's First Reform Bill—Appeal to the Country—Cobden Returned for Rochdale—Bright for Birmingham.

AFTER the attempt by Felicé Orsini to assassinate the Emperor of the French, Lord Palmerston introduced into the House of Commons a "Conspiracy to Murder Bill," its object being, it was stated, to restrain and punish conspiracies hatched in Great Britain against the lives of foreign potentates. The English people were at once incensed against such a measure, as it was deemed an encroachment upon the ancient British privileges of asylum. The object of Lord Palmerston was not to amend the law, but to make a show of compliance with the demands preferred by the French Government. Count Persigny wanted some restriction to be placed on the right of aliens; but the Bill left this right untouched. The Count asked for such increased stringency in our police arrangements as to facilitate the detection of conspiracies; but Lord Palmerston's Bill merely increased the punishment for the crime when discovered.

Not many months before this event Lord Palmerston had flattered himself that he had put his "heel on the political neck" of Bright and Gibson. Now, however, that they were both in the House again, and as they disapproved of Palmerston's conduct with regard to the Conspiracy Bill, they determined upon a trial of strength with the Premier, and on the second reading on the 18th of February Mr. Milner Gibson proposed as an amendment:—

"That the House hears with much concern that it is alleged that the recent attempts on the life of the Emperor of the French have been devised in England, and expresses its detestation of such guilty enterprises. That this House is ready at all times to assist in remedying any defects in the criminal laws which, after due investigation, are proved to exist; yet it cannot but regret that her Majesty's Government, previously to inviting the House to amend the laws of conspiracy at the present time, have not felt it to be their duty to make some reply to the important despatch received from the French Government, dated Paris, January 20th, 1858, and which has been laid before Parliament."

Mr. Bright seconded this amendment, which received 234 votes in its support, and 215 against it, there thus being a majority

of 19 against the Government. The vote was a true expression of national feeling, in which all the parties concurred, for they disapproved of Lord Palmerston's readiness to change the laws of England at the dictation of a foreign potentate. It was a very severe reverse, coming within a year after his triumph; and the Premier felt it to be so. When the numbers were announced, he sat for a time with his face hidden, so that the excited gazers could not see how deeply he was moved.

Lord Palmerston and his Cabinet resigned on the 20th February, 1858, when Lord Derby was called in, and he consented to form a Ministry. The following appointments were made:—Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons, Mr. Disraeli; Lord Chancellor, Sir F. Thesiger; President of the Council, Marquis of Salisbury; Foreign Secretary, Lord Malmesbury.

Lord Palmerston and his Cabinet, and supposed followers, who had been regarded as very formidable, were blown away, as it were, by a puff of wind. Here was a minister of great experience, who was regarded as a sagacious politician, suddenly tripped up by an almost unpremeditated stroke of Parliamentary tactics, after having provoked his downfall by palpable blunders committed in the very field of action which had been the study and occupation of his life. His popularity resembled

“The uncertain glory of an April day;
Which now shows all the beauty of the sun,
And by-and-bye a cloud takes all away.”

Cunning and dexterity avail more to worldly success than true wisdom. In many instances things work themselves, and events carry forward the man as often as the man directs them. Besides, the greater instrument of success is the adaptation of a man's peculiar faculties to the work in hand, rather than the superior order of his general abilities. Such were Lord Palmerston's characteristics. It might be said that he was conducted by accident to the helm of the nation, and his career has shown that ordinary faculties, when aided by place and pertinacity, may produce great changes in the destinies of a nation.

“When I read,” said Mr. Cobden to a friend, “the account of Bright and Gibson walking up to the table of the House to pass sentence upon that venerable political sinner, I could not help thinking what a fine historical picture the artist missed. There was surely something more than chance in bringing back these two men to inflict summary punishment on the man who flattered himself a few months ago that he had put his heel on their political necks. For the first time I felt regret at not being there to witness that scene of retributive justice.”

The new Ministry brought forward an important measure on the 26th March, 1858, for the abolition of the ruling power of

the East India Company, and for the future government of India by the Crown. Mr. Bright for twelve years, both in and out of Parliament, had opposed the existence of this Company, and, during the debates, delivered able speeches as to the best mode of governing India. On the 1st May, 1858, Mr. Disraeli introduced the Bill to the House of Commons. At the adjourned debate, on the 20th May, Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech, in the course of which he said :—

“ I am willing to avow that I am in favour of justice and conciliation—of the law of justice and of kindness. Justice and mercy are the supreme attributes of the perfection which we call Deity, and all men everywhere comprehend them ; there is no speech nor language in which their voice is not heard, and they could not have been vainly exercised with regard to the docile and intelligent millions of India. You had the choice. You have tried the sword. It has broken ; it now rests broken in your grasp ; and you stand humbled and rebuked. You stand humbled and rebuked before the eyes of civilised Europe. You may have another chance. You may, by possibility, have another chance of governing India. If you have, I beseech you to make the best use of it. Do not let us pursue such a policy as many men in India, and some in England, have advocated, but which hereafter you will have to regret, which can end only, as I believe, in something approaching to the ruin of this country, and which must, if it be persisted in, involve our name and nation in everlasting disgrace.” (Cheers.)

On the 24th June, 1858, Mr. Bright delivered a masterly address in the House of Commons as to how India could be most beneficially governed with a view to the welfare of the people and the permanence of our rule, and said :—

“ What is it we have to complain of in India ? What is it that the people of India, if they spoke by my mouth, have to complain of ? They would tell the House that, as a rule, throughout almost all the Presidencies, and throughout those Presidencies most of which have been longest under British rule, the cultivators of the soil, the great body of the population of India, are in a condition of great impoverishment, of great dejection, and of great suffering. I have, on former occasions, quoted to the House the report of a committee which I obtained ten years ago, upon which sat several members of the Court of Directors ; and they all agreed to report as much as I have now stated to the House—the report being confined chiefly to the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. If I were now submitting the case of the population of India, I would say that the taxes of India are more onerous and oppressive than the taxes of any other country in the world. I think I could demonstrate that proposition to the House. I would show that industry is neglected by the Government to a greater extent probably than is the case in any other country in the world which has been for any length of time under what is termed a civilised and Christian government. I should be able to show from the notes and memoranda of eminent men in India—of the Governor of Bengal, Mr. Halliday, for example—that there is not, and never has been in any country pretending to be civilised, a condition of things to be compared with that which exists under the police administration of the province of Bengal. With regard to the courts of justice I may say the same thing. I could quote passages from books written in favour of the Company with all the bias which the strongest friends of the Company can have, in which the writers declare that, precisely in proportion as English courts of justice have extended, have perjury, and all the evils which perjury introduces into the administration of justice, prevailed throughout the Presidencies of India. With regard to public works, if I were speaking for the natives of India, I would state this fact, that in a single English county there are more roads—more travelable roads—than are to be found in the whole of India ; and I would say also that the single city of Manchester, in the supply of its inhabitants with the single article of water, has spent a larger sum of money than the East India Company have spent in fourteen years,

from 1834 to 1848, in public works of every kind throughout the whole of its vast dominions. I would say that the real activity of the Indian Government has been an activity of conquest and annexation—of conquest and annexation which after a time has led to a fearful catastrophe which has enforced on the House an attention to the question of India, which but for that catastrophe I fear the House would not have given it. . . . I entreat the House to study it not only now, during the passing of this Bill, but after the session is over, and till we meet again next year, when, in all probability, there must be further legislation upon this great subject; for I believe that upon this question depends very much, for good or for evil, the future of this country of which we are citizens, and which we all regard and love so much. You have had enough of military reputation on Eastern fields; you have gathered large harvests of that commodity, be it valuable or be it worthless. I invite you to something better, and higher, and holier than that: I invite you to a glory not ‘fanned by conquest’s crimson wing,’ but based upon the solid and lasting benefits which I believe the Parliament of England can, if it will, confer upon the countless populations of India.” (Cheers.)

In another speech, delivered in 1868, Mr. Bright said:—

“Now fifteen years ago the government of India was the most extraordinary government in the world—I will say the most remarkable government that had ever been in the world. It was called a double government. It consisted of a number of directors of an extinct trading company, a company that was always bankrupt. The directors, who were bred in corruption, and who practiced it during their tenure of office, and who, in point of fact, may be said to have lived upon it, neglected everything they ought to have done except the collection and the expenditure of the taxes.”

In another speech, in 1877, he also remarked that he had taken great pains for years to show that the praises bestowed upon the East India Company were not deserved, and that he urged for years that the Company should be abolished. When the Mutiny came in 1859, there was nobody to say anything, or hardly anything, for the Company, and the famous old institution tumbled over at once, and it had scarcely a friend or a single element of power left in it.

Ultimately the government of India was transferred to the Crown, and a system of competitive examinations for the various civil offices was introduced. The Royal Proclamation to the people of India contained many of the sentiments which had been expressed by Mr. Bright.

“Firmly relying ourselves on the truth of Christianity, and acknowledging with gratitude the solace of religion,” the proclamation continued, “we disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our subjects. We declare it to be our royal will and pleasure that none be in anywise favoured, none molested or disquieted, by reason of their religious faith or observances, but that all shall enjoy alike the equal and impartial protection of the law; and we do strictly charge and enjoin all those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from all interference with the religious belief or worship of any of our subjects, on pain of our highest displeasure. And it is our further will that, so far as may be, our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in our service, the duties of which they may be qualified, by their education, ability, and integrity, duly to discharge.”

This clause in the message of peace gave great satisfaction to the natives, and assisted in extinguishing the smouldering

embers of rebellion. If some other of Mr. Bright's suggestions had been carried out, India would have been in a far better state than it is at present. Our policy before this was force and neglect. Our olive branch was attached to the end of the bayonet, and if it was not graciously received, we enforced our commands with the roar of shot and shell from an 8-inch howitzer. A new era of nobler sentiments has been inaugurated, and our rule in India depends more upon the personal character of the few Europeans who constitute the dominant races there than on anything else in the world.

A discussion took place in the House of Commons on European armaments on the 11th of June, for the old bogie—French invasion—again stalked about our coast. Mr. Bright on this occasion remarked that he knew an old lady of eighty years of age, whom some professor, he did not know who, had been trying to alarm by appealing to her in a circular about the danger of the French invasion. She said, "I am not alarmed at all. I have lived in the world eighty years, and, as long as I recollect anything, there has always been a story of a French invasion." He had received a letter from a small master cutler at Sheffield, who stated that he had seven children, that trade was very bad and he was struggling for a living, and that he hoped the Government would introduce a different foreign policy, that we might have fewer generals, fewer armaments, lighter taxes, and a chance for an honest and industrious man to support his family. People asked him (Mr. Bright) why he supported the Ministry then in power? The question was not one of Conservatism nor of aristocracy, but of the obvious interests of the country and of humanity; and he said a government with a foreign policy of moderation and justice was the government he should select, rather than a government that pretended to give an exhibition of power for all parts of the world. It was apparent that the reason why Mr. Bright supported the Conservative ministry at this particular time was because he found it would do his work more readily than the Palmerstonian Cabinet.

On the 27th of October, 1858, Mr. Bright, for the first time since his election, met his constituents at a public meeting in the Birmingham Town Hall, and the sight was most imposing. In order to give accommodation to the greatest number of persons, the seats were displaced except in the great gallery and on the platform, and it may be easily imagined what immense numbers were present when it is stated that this vast hall was crowded. Mr. Bright on entering received an overwhelming ovation,

equalling those brilliant receptions he had been accustomed to receive in Manchester. The upturned faces presented an expression of curiosity, as if they were closely inspecting the personal appearance of their new member, and had come to a favourable decision. Sir John Radcliffe presided, and briefly introduced Mr. Bright, who was again lustily cheered. There was then a silence almost too solemn in so great a multitude as the speaker thus began :—

“If I exhibit embarrassment in rising to address you, I must ask your forbearance, for in truth, as I cast my eyes over this great assembly, I feel myself almost bewildered and oppressed with a consciousness of my incapacity to fulfil properly the duty which devolves upon me to-night. It is now nearly three years since I was permitted, and, indeed, since I was able, to stand upon any public platform to address any public meeting of my countrymen; and during that period I have passed through a new and a great experience. From apparent health I have been brought down to a condition of weakness exceeding the weakness of a little child, in which I could neither read nor write, nor converse for more than a few minutes without distress and without peril; and from that condition by degrees so fine as to be imperceptible even to myself, I have been restored to the comparative health in which you now behold me. In remembrance of all this, is it wrong in me to acknowledge here, in the presence of you all, with reverent and thankful heart, the signal favour which has been extended to me by the great Supreme? Is it wrong that I should take this opportunity of expressing the gratitude which I feel to all classes of my countrymen for the numberless kindnesses which I have received from them during this period—from those high in rank and abounding in wealth and influence, to the dweller on one of our Lancashire moors, who sent me a most kind message to say that he believed where he lived was the healthiest spot in England, and that if I would come and take up my abode with him for a time, though his means were limited and his dwelling humble, he would contrive to let me have a room to myself. I say, looking back to all this, that if I have ever done anything for my countrymen, or for their interests in any shape, I am amply compensated by the abundant kindness they have shown to me during the last three years. And if there be any colour of shade to this picture, if there be men who subjected me to a passionate and ungenerous treatment when I was stricken down and was enduring a tedious exile, though the best years of my life were engaged in the defence of their interests, I have the consolation of knowing that their verdict was not approved by the country, and that when my cause came up by appeal to a superior, because an impartial tribunal, their verdict was condemned and set aside by the unanimous judgment of the electors and population of this great central city of the kingdom. (Cheers.) . . . I am afraid to say how many persons I now see before me who are by the present constitution of this country shut out from any participation in political power. (Cheers.) I shall take this opportunity of discussing, and, as far as I am able, with brevity and distinctness, what I think we ought to aim at now, when the great question of Parliamentary Reform is before the country. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I think we may fairly say that that question occupies now something like a triumphant position, and at the same time a position of great peril—triumphant, inasmuch as it has now no open enemies—perilous, inasmuch as, for the moment, it is taken up by those who, up to this hour, have been for the most part the uncompromising opponents of Reform. We have had four governments pledged to Parliamentary Reform within the last few years. Lord J. Russell, as Prime Minister, introduced a Reform Bill, and afterwards, in the Government of Lord Aberdeen, Lord J. Russell introduced another Reform Bill, and the least said of these two Bills, especially of the latter, the better. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The Government which has recently been overthrown pledged itself to the country and the House of Commons to bring in a Reform Bill, but at the time when it came to an unexpected, but a not undeserved end, no Bill had been prepared, so that we knew nothing of the particulars of which it was to be composed. We have now a government under the chieftainship of Lord Derby, who, during

his short term of office in 1852, stated, if I remember right, that one of the chief objects of his Government would be to stem the tide of democracy. (Loud laughter.) Now, it may be that Lord Derby has entirely changed his mind, that he is as much converted to Parliamentary Reform as Sir R. Peel, in 1846, was converted to corn-law repeal." (Cheers.)

The speech was principally an appeal on behalf of Parliamentary Reform, and the effect of the sublime peroration was the most extraordinary and exciting ever witnessed in any public meeting. Rising with his subject, the great orator, with all his accustomed fire in his voice and action, spoke thus:—

"Why should they not by some arrangement have their own Reform Bill, and have it introduced into Parliament supported with all the strength of their great national party—(cheers)—and if it be a Bill sensibly better than that Bill that is being prepared for us in Downing Street, we should go with the utmost unanimity of which we are capable—by public meetings, by petition—and when the time comes, at the polling booth, for the purpose of supporting that Bill. (Cheers.) I say we are great in numbers, and if united we are great in strength; that we are invincible in the solidity of our arguments, and that we are altogether unassailable in the justice of our great cause. Shall we then, I ask you, even for a moment, be hopeless of that great cause? I feel almost ashamed to argue it to such a meeting as this, when I call to mind where I am and who are my hearers. (Cheers.) Am I not in the town of Birmingham, England's central capital? and do not these eyes look upon the sons of those who, not thirty years ago, shook the fabric of privilege to its base? (Great cheering.) The strong men, not a few of the strong men of that time, are now white with age. (Hear, hear.) They approach the confines of their mortal day—its evening is cheered by the remembrance of that great contest, and they behold and they rejoice in the freedom that they have won. (Cheers.) Shall their sons be less noble than they? (Voices: "No!") Shall the fire which they kindled be extinguished with you? (Voices: "No.") I see the answer in every face. (Cheers.) You resolve that the legacy which they bequeathed to you, you will hand down in accumulated wealth of freedom to your children. (Prolonged cheering.) As for me, my voice is feeble. I feel now sensibly, painfully, that I am not now what I was. I speak with a diminished fire, I act with a lessened force, but as I am, my countrymen and constituents, I will, if you will let me, be found in your ranks in the impending struggle." (Great cheering.)

This speech was considered one of his happiest efforts; but his partial hoarseness interfered in a certain degree with the rich tones of his thrilling voice.

On the 29th October, 1858, a grand banquet was held in the Birmingham Town Hall in honour of Mr. Bright. Mr. P. H. Muntz presided, and there was a very select attendance. Mr. Bright, in the course of a lengthy speech, said:—

"Now, I take the liberty here, in the presence of an audience as intelligent as can be collected within the limits of this land, and before those who have the strongest claim to know, what I do hold with regard to certain great questions of public policy. I take the liberty here to assert that I hold no views on these controverted questions, that I have never promulgated any view with respect to which I cannot bring as witnesses in my favour, as fellow-believers with myself, some of the best and most revered names in the history of English statesmanship. One hundred and twenty years ago the Government of this country was conducted by Sir Robert Walpole, a great Minister, who for many years preserved the country in peace, and whose pride it was during those years that he had done so. Unfortunately, towards the close of his career he was driven by faction into a policy which

was the ruin of his political plans. Sir R. Walpole declared, speaking of the question of war as affecting this country, that nothing could be so foolish, nothing so mad, as a policy of war for a trading nation; and he went so far as to say that any peace was better than the most successful war. Come down fifteen years nearer to our own time, and you find a statesman, not long in office, but still living in the affections of persons of Liberal principles in this country, and in his time representing fully the principles of the Liberal party—Charles James Fox. (Loud cheers.) Mr. Fox, referring to the policy of the Government of his time, which was one of constant interference in the affairs of Europe, by which the country was continually involved in the calamities of war, said that although he would not assert or maintain the principle that under no circumstances should England have any cause of interference with the affairs of the continent of Europe, yet that he would prefer a policy of non-interference and of perfect insulation, rather than the constant intermeddling into which our recent policy had led us, and which brought so many troubles and sufferings on the country. Now, come down fifty years later, to the time within the recollection of some of us, and we find another great statesman, once one of the most popular men in England, and now remembered with respect and affection—the late Lord Grey. (Cheers.) When Lord Grey came into office for the purpose of carrying the question of Parliamentary Reform, he unfurled the banner of “peace, retrenchment, and reform,” and that sentence and that sentiment were received throughout every part of the United Kingdom by every man who was or had been in favour of Liberal principles, as the pronouncement of the commencement of a new era which should save the country from many of the calamities of the past. Come down still nearer, and to a time that seems but the other day, and we find another Minister, second to none of those I have mentioned—the late Sir R. Peel. (Loud cheers.) I was then in the House of Commons. Seeing the conduct of Sir R. Peel from the time when he took office in 1841, I observed his conduct particularly after the year 1843, when I entered the House, up to the time of his lamented death. During the whole of that period I venture to say that his principles, if they are to be discovered from his conduct and his speeches, were precisely the course which I have held, and which I have always endeavoured to press upon the attention of my countrymen—(hear, hear)—and if you have any doubt about it, I would refer you to that best, that most beautiful and most impressive speech, which he delivered with a solemnity and a sense of responsibility as if he had known he was leaving a legacy to his country. If you refer to that speech, delivered on the morning of the very day on which occurred that accident which terminated his life, you will find that the whole tenor of that speech is in conformity with all the doctrines that I have urged upon my country for years past with respect to our policy in foreign affairs. (Cheers.) . . . Does it not look irrational now, that there were men thirty years ago who were absolutely frantic at the idea that the people of Birmingham, so low down as £10 householders, should have votes? Does it not look like an actual exhibition of idiotic feeling, that a banker in Leeds should, when it was proposed to transfer Leeds from one of those rotten boroughs which existed before the Reform Bill, and which the House of Commons was about to disfranchise, that a banker there declared—on his authority it was repeated in the House of Commons, and you will find it in *Hansard*—that he did not believe that when the franchise was conferred upon the people of Leeds, to the extent it is now, that it would be possible to keep the bank doors open with safety—(laughter)—and that he should remove his business to some quiet place where it would be out of danger of the savages that inhabited that locality. (Loud cheers and laughter.) . . . Take another point, the question of Protection. Not thirteen years ago, or twelve years, there was a great party in Parliament, led by a duke in one House, and by the brother and son of a duke in the other House, and they declared that it would be utter ruin, not only upon agriculture but upon the manufacture and commerce of England, if we depended upon our own theories on the subject of Protection. They told us that the labourer—and I pity the labourer, such friends as he has had, and of whom it may be said in this country, and might be said then—

‘Here landless labourers, hopeless, toil and strive,
To taste no portion of the sweets they hive.’

The labourer was to be ruined; that was the proper way to be pauperised. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Well, but these gentlemen were overthrown. The common instincts and good sense of the country swept away all their crude theories.”

The theories of such rulers as those described by Mr. Bright

bring forcibly to mind Dr. Walter Harte's famous lines on the poor:—

“They thanked their Maker for a pittance sent,
Supped on a turnip, slept, and were content.”

Mr. Bright concluded his speech with the following sublime peroration:—

“May I beg you, then, to believe, as I do most devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual churches, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. (Loud cheers.) I believe, too, that if nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which inevitably follows; it may not come at once—it may not come in our lifetime—but, depend upon it, the great Italian is not only a poet but he is a prophet when he says:—

‘The sword of Heaven is not in haste to smite
Nor yet doth linger.’

(Cheers.) We have experience, we have beacons, we have landmarks enough, we know what the past has cost, we know how much and how far we have erred, but we are not left without a guide; we have not, as an ancient people had, the Urim and Thummim, the oracles of Aaron's breast, from which we can take counsel; but we have the unchangeable principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we live by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation, or our people a happy people.” (Cheers.)

Both of these Birmingham speeches were very much admired, for

“Breathing Nature lives in every line,
Chaste and subdued.”

The editor of the *Saturday Review* gave it as his opinion that “no living speaker of the pure well of English undefiled counts a more powerful or accomplished master, and no man can clothe noble and worthy thoughts in more nervous and striking language. His oration on the Russian war and on Indian legislation enlisted the admiration of those whose sympathies he failed to conciliate.” The editor, however, did not agree with most of the sentiments enunciated by Mr. Bright, and his criticisms were severe.

About this time a cry was raised that Mr. Bright was endeavouring to Ameritanise our institutions. The editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times* humorously commented on the complaint by declaring—“We instantly avow a dislike to lank hair, lean cheeks, and turn-down collars. We are in a fury of indignation at stump oratory, hard shells, and locofocos. We catch a shadowy glimpse of a Guelphic lady at a wash-tub in Saxe-Coburg turning a mangle, and a half-a-dozen young princes looking out for situations as errand boys. . . . And for ourselves, the very stupidity of the charge awakens suspicion; and we desire to ask with all deference what it distinctly means. Mainly two things he (Mr. Bright) advocates—a wider exten-

sion of the suffrage, together with such apportioning votes to members of electoral and representative power as shall make the House of Commons a fair index to the opinions of the nation ; and as a guarantee to the independence of the voter he claims the protection of the ballot. These charges, it will be observed, are merely a sequel to much which has gone before."

A conference of gentlemen, who were desirous of effecting a reform in Parliament, assembled at the Guildhall Coffee House, London, on the 5th of November. Mr. Clay, M.P., presided, and there was a large number of members of Parliament present. The principal resolution was moved by Mr. Roebuck, M.P. :—

"That this conference believes that it gives effect to the opinion of the country, in requesting Mr. Bright, after consultation with the friends of the cause with whom he may see fit to advise, to prepare and take charge of such a measure."

Mr. Miall seconded this resolution, which was carried unanimously. Mr. Bright, in responding, said :—

"I confess I have been thinking of it for the last two or three days, and not only every hour but almost every moment of the day, because I know the tremendous responsibility which it imposes upon me if I accept the charge you kindly wish to commit to me. I have no pretension whatever either to be a leader to a popular party out of doors, or to act as leader in the House of Commons. I have never made any pretension whatever to such a character, and I know how much in many respects my indisposition unfits me for such a place. No one can lead a political party who is not somewhat pliant, that he may be able in some degree to follow that party. (Hear, hear.) Now, I have not been very pliant in following any parties that I have hitherto seen. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) I have endeavoured all along to do what appeared to me to be right in every cause that has come before me—(cheers)—but I hope I have not been unwilling, and I am not unwilling now ; and I shall not be unwilling on this question, if I am more directly connected with it, to make whatever concessions are reasonable and necessary to the great object we have in view—(cheers)—but the difficulties are far greater than probably many gentlemen here who are not inside the House of Parliament can conceive." (Hear, hear.)

From Mr. Bright's ability and energy great were the expectations raised, although arduous was the labour set before him ; but he had been successful in working out most of the schemes he had taken in hand, and his had been a life of labour. They knew that he had confidence in the middle and lower ranks of society, who were too numerous to be influenced by a Minister, and almost out of the reach of aristocratic corruption, and that both classes would constitute the best bulwarks of liberty and progress.

A soirée was held in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, on the 10th December, 1858, in honour of Messrs. Bright and Gibson, and the scene which was witnessed superseded every similar gathering that had assembled within the walls of that magnificent hall ; and it recalled to the mind of most present the touching reminiscences of the hey-day of the League.

Three thousand five hundred persons were present, and the great interest felt in the proceedings outside Manchester may be judged from the fact that upwards of fifty representatives of the daily press from all parts of the country reported the proceedings. Upon Messrs. Bright and Gibson appearing on the platform they were welcomed with lusty rounds of cheers and waving of handkerchiefs and hats. The organ struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and the audience warmly joined in singing this favourite song, and the words, "Should auld acquaintance be forgot," rolled forth in magnificent and affecting chorus. Mr. George Wilson once more occupied the chair. Mr. G. Hadfield moved the first resolution:—

"That this meeting presents to Mr. John Bright its respectful and cordial congratulation on his restoration to health, and expresses its devout gratitude that he is thereby enabled once more to devote his great energy and eminent abilities to the service of the people." (Cheers.)

The Rev. Dr. McKerrow seconded this resolution, which was carried amidst great cheering. Mr. Bright responded in a lengthy speech:—

"I know not whether there will be persons who will look upon this meeting in the light of a commemoration of a defeat which we have sustained. To me it wears far more the aspect of the celebration of some great victory. (Loud cheers.) And may we not say that we are successful—that notwithstanding the vicissitudes which wait upon the career of public men, and upon the progress of public questions in a free country, we find as we look back over a term of years, that those beneficent principles which we have so often expounded and defended on this ground, are constantly making progress and obtaining more and more influence on the minds of all our countrymen? (Cheers.) Forty years ago the spot where we are now assembled became famous. Thousands of the population of Manchester and its neighbourhood assembled here—not in this magnificent building, but under the wide canopy of heaven. They met only to plead with the Government and the Parliament of that day that they might be permitted some share in the government of their country, and that they might be permitted further to possess that natural right which one would think no man would ever deny to another—the right of disposing of the produce of their labour in the open market of the world in purchase for their daily bread. That meeting was dispersed by the rude arm of military power. The tragedy of that day proved at once the tyranny and brutality of the Government, and the helplessness and humiliation of the people. Now, you have seen a Ministry representing and supported by the political party that committed that iniquity—you have seen such a Ministry voting in the House of Commons in favour of a resolution which declared that the repeal of the corn-laws had been a great blessing to the country; and after having twenty-six years ago obtained one instalment of Reform, you have now the amazing spectacle of a Ministry representing and supported by that same political party, engaged at this very hour in the arrangement of the clauses of another Bill which shall still further extend political rights to the great mass of the population of this country. Seeing this, then, who will despair? Since I have been able to think maturely upon public questions, since I have been able and have been permitted to open my mouth in these the open councils of my countrymen, I have never for one moment despaired; and when I look around me, and see this magnificent—I will say this all-powerful—assembly, my hopes, my faith, all are confirmed, and I gather fresh strength for whatever struggle is before us." (Cheers.)

The meeting passed off very agreeably, for

"Sorrow remembered sweetens present joy."

Mr. Bright next visited Edinburgh, and in the Music Hall of that city, on the 15th of December, spoke for an hour and thirty minutes, on "Reform," to an immense gathering. Mr. Duncan McLaren occupied the chair. Mr. Bright, in concluding his speech, observed:—

"Why have we such peace in the country now? Compare the period from 1793 to 1842, and you will find very few years in which there was anything like settled peace in the country. There were riots, insurrections, and seditious meetings; great numbers were imprisoned, not a few were transported, and some even suffered the last penalty of the law. Why is it that you have had of late years a state of things wholly different? Because people feel that their interests are not so wholly disregarded, because the policy pursued by the Legislature from 1842 to 1846, and especially in 1846, has tended more than all the legislation of our own time, or in our fathers' lifetime, to give comfort and plenty and ease throughout the homes of the people of this country. We have done more for the peace and security of this realm, and for the glory of the Crown, than all the peerage have done during our lifetime. (Renewed cheers.) And now we ask—What for? For a great change—a change following up the change of twenty-six years ago. We base our propositions upon just principles, on the principles on which that change was based, on the principles which the unanimous opinion of the people and statesmen of England has already sanctioned. We intend to keep by the ancient landmarks as far as possible. We are warranted by the experience of the past. Our measure shall be matured in its strength, but it shall be of irresistible strength in its moderation. It is calculated, or it will be calculated, I believe, to knit together all orders and conditions of men within the realm, and I believe from my conscience it will give additional freedom and greatness and happiness to the people of this country." (Great applause.)

Mr. Bright delivered another speech on Reform in the City Hall, Glasgow, on the 21st of December, to an immense number of persons. Mr. Walter Buchanan, M.P. for Glasgow, officiated as chairman. Mr. Bright remarked, at the close of a long speech—

"I have devoted many years of my life, I have spent much labour, in advocating a greater freedom of the soil. I believe that it would work better and prove more profitable to the landed proprietors themselves. I think that free land, greater economy in the public expenditure, with the growing intelligence which we see all around us, and the improvement which is taking place in the more temperate habits of the people—all these things together filled me with the hope that whatever we have in the annals of the past of which we can boast, there is still a brighter future in store for this country. I come amongst you not to stir up animosity between class and class; that is the charge brought against me by men who wish that one class may permanently rule over every other class. I come amongst you that we may deliberate on those great questions on which our success and our prosperity depend. You know, at least if you do not know it, I will tell you, that I am no frequenter of Courts. I have never sought for office or the emoluments of place. I have no craving for popularity. I think I have little of that which may be called the lust for fame. I am a citizen of a free country. I love my country, I love its freedom; but I believe that freedom can only be extended and retained by a fair and honest representation of the people; and it is because I believe this that I am here to-night to ask you, through the power of your intelligence and your numbers, to step into the position which now opens up before you." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright, in St. George's Hall, Bradford, on the 17th of January, 1859, in the presence of about 4,000 persons, explained some of the details of his proposed Reform Bill. Mr. H. Brown,

the mayor, occupied the chair. Mr. Bright's long speech was temperate and judicious. The main features of the Bill were: "the Borough Franchise was conferred upon all who were rated to the relief of the poor, and on all lodgers who paid a rent of £10; no more freemen were to be created; and the County Franchise was reduced to £10 rental. The Bill put the returning officer's expenses on the county or borough rate; prescribed that votes should be taken by ballot; it proposed to disfranchise fifty-six English, twenty-one Scotch, and nine Irish boroughs; and took away one member from thirty-four other boroughs. The seats obtained by these disfranchisements were to be distributed according to population among the larger towns, counties, and divisions of counties in the United Kingdom." Reform meetings were held in nearly every town and village, approving of the Bill compiled by Mr. Bright.

The inhabitants of Rochdale were so delighted with the restoration to health of Mr. Bright, their fellow-townsmen, that they decided to hold a *soirée*, so as to have an opportunity of congratulating him on his recovery and re-appearance amongst them. The intended *soirée* becoming known, the promoters were deluged with applications for tickets, and although the largest hall in the town was engaged, hundreds were unable to obtain admission, on account of the hall not being sufficiently large to accommodate them. It came off on the 28th of January, 1859, in the Public Hall, and about 1,100 ladies and gentlemen were present. The large room under the hall was adorned with banners, flags, and gay devices, and the tables presented a most luxurious aspect. On the entrance of Mr. John Bright the applause of the audience was most enthusiastic, the cheers being renewed again and again. Mr. Andrew Stewart, the mayor, presided, and, in opening the meeting, assured Mr. Bright that it was the sincere desire of every individual in that large assembly that his health and that his life might be long spared to take a prominent part in the deliberations of the Senate of this great nation.

Mr. William Fenton, J.P., moved:—

"That this meeting desires to place on record the high esteem entertained for John Bright, Esq., M.P., by his fellow-townsmen. Born and educated amongst us, a member of a family noted for liberality and the care bestowed by them on the physical and intellectual improvement of their numerous workpeople, he early developed in the defence and advancement of local interests those great talents and high-minded integrity which have since, in a more extended sphere, and on questions of national importance, gained him a world-wide and lasting reputation. Recognising these services, his fellow-townsmen have assembled on this occasion to assure him of the sympathy they felt for him in his affliction and temporary exile; how greatly they rejoice in his restoration to health and a seat in the British Parliament; and to express their fervent hope that he may be spared, not only to bring to a successful issue the great measure of Parliamentary Reform confided to his care,

but to reap the only reward he seeks, in seeing it contribute in future years to the peace, happiness, and prosperity of his fellow-countrymen."

Mr. G. Ashworth, J.P., seconded the resolution, which was carried with every demonstration of enthusiasm.

Mr. Bright, on rising, was vociferously applauded, and in the course of a lengthy speech said:—

"This is to me not an ordinary public or political meeting. (Hear, hear.) It has another, and I may say deeper, significance, for I find myself surrounded by my friends and neighbours with whom I have lived and amongst whom I have lived from my youth—(hear, hear)—by those with whom I have acted on many questions—some of local and others of a more general character, who have known much of my private and all of my public life (hear, hear); and I am permitted, I hope, to accept this manifestation of your kindness as a token at least that you believe in the main that I have endeavoured to pursue a course—(applause)—in unison with the best interests and with honour to my country. (Hear, hear.) . . . I have seen more people met together during the last three months than anybody else has. I know the sympathy which has been expressed. I have seen the light and fire of enthusiasm in their eyes, and I know they do care for this question—(the extension of the franchise). I know they have reason to care. Are they not the most industrious people on the face of the earth? Have they not more steam-power, more manufacturing, more power of locomotion, and more, in brief, of that which develops wealth, than among other people on the face of the globe? and yet, at this moment, with all our boasted civilisation and freedom, I believe we have a greater number of paupers than any other country. We bury in twenty-five years a million of paupers; but there is always a new crop, always a substratum of society, deplorable and lamentable to contemplate, always rising to fill the place of those that drop off. But that is a very indirect representation of the suffering that does exist. When a man is once a pauper he feels no longer independent, or that he is in a degraded position. He finds himself secure of a living for the rest of his days, it may be in the workhouse or in some wretched hovel, where the guardians eke out to him outdoor relief, but he is free from anxiety for his future years. But in the stratum just above we have a great number who have not lost their self-respect, who have families who are expecting from them, day by day, their daily bread. These have often experienced the fluctuation of wages, and find themselves now a little more comfortable and again depressed. Imagine the suffering of these men struggling—struggles which we know nothing of,—then having framed such an inadequate conception of all this, let us ask ourselves, How is it that all this exists in this country, with its magnificent power of production, which should be able to secure the luxury and comfort of every man in England? (Applause). Has God forgotten to be gracious? Is it the Creator, omnipotent and gracious, or is it the man, with his crime and his plunder, that permits it? (Applause.) Who have been your rulers for generations back? Who have squandered your money? Who have shed your blood? For whom have the people of England toiled, and sweated, and bled, for generations back, and with what result? Why, to be insulted now in the year 1859, and told, with lordly arrogance, that it is not fitting that they should be admitted to the exercise of the Franchise. (Cheers.) What has been the object of my political life during its twenty years' continuance? You, my townsmen, know it perfectly well—(applause)—and I call you as witness in my behalf. (At this point the whole audience rose and cheered most enthusiastically for some time.) I laboured with an earnest and successful band—(hear, hear, and cheers)—Villiers and Cobden—(hear, hear)—and Gibson—(applause)—and George Wilson—(loud applause)—and many others whom I cannot mention, but who live, and will ever live, in my remembrance. I laboured with them to give the people their daily bread, and now twenty millions' worth of food finds its way to your shores, which about fourteen years ago you were not allowed to speak of without being charged with treason to your master class. (Applause.) I laboured with earnest men to strike the stamp from the newspaper, and to establish a Free Press—(applause)—and now three hundred—I am told so many—cheap newspapers have sprung into life, conveying information on every topic, every day, to almost every house in the kingdom. I have striven—but I regret to say with less success—that the precious earnings of the people, and their still more precious blood, might not

be squandered—(applause)—by guilty statesmen—(applause)—in guilty wars. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I ask for my countrymen that which is the promise of their constitution—that they shall have a fair and full representation in the House of Commons. (Cheers.) It is a just demand, and I ask you, I ask all of my countrymen, to speak out for it, without any faltering, with no uncertain voice. Speak, and you will be listened to; ask, in tones which cannot be misunderstood, and that which you ask will be certainly granted. If you come of a great ancestry, as your historians say you do, do not disgrace them now. If you are as you boast, a race of freemen, rise, I beseech you, and take possession of the heritage which is yours." (Enthusiastic cheers.)

Mr. Bright's opponents asserted that Mr. Cobden did not approve of the extension of the Franchise, for he was a careful and thoughtful man. A clergyman of the Church of England, who thought he had discovered passages in the Prayer-book in favour of the Reform Bill, as well as sanctioning all sorts of Radical measures, wished to obtain Mr. Cobden's opinion as to the advisability of issuing a pamphlet on the subject. Mr. Cobden replied:—

"It draws an argument from a new source in favour of Reform. I never before heard the Prayer-book brought forward as evidence in favour of the Radicals. *We* have generally been considered a very graceless, unorthodox set. Henceforth, the enemy must not say that we are without the benefit of clergy. But seriously, whilst I admire the originality and love of abstract justice which characterises Mr. —'s argument, as well as the cleverness with which it is stated, I do not think at the present moment it would be of practical utility to put forth a plea so novel, and indicating changes which are not possible in our day. Mr. Bright's scheme is a sufficiently bold measure, and too good, I fear, to be realised at present. What chance, then, can there be for a still more sweeping change? . . . I observe what you say about my supporting Mr. Bright. I can do but little, even if I rush into the arena, for everybody *knows that my sentiments are identical with his own*. What is wanting is some multitudinous demonstrations by the unenfranchised in favour of Parliamentary Reform—something as earnest as in the days of Hunt, but without the disorder of that time. But I am afraid you are too prosperous, and the people too well fed, to warrant the hope that Lancashire will come to the rescue. Until the masses do again put in their claim for the Franchise, they will not obtain it. It is not in human nature that the middle class, who are already within the privileged pale, should be eager to admit those outside to share their power, unless they are gently pressed to open the door."

A Reform Conference was held in the assembly room of the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on the 1st of February. About 1,000 persons from that city and surrounding towns were present. Mr. George Wilson presided. Mr. Bright explained that his Bill, as a whole, was founded upon long and easily-understood principles, recognising the great rights of the people, favouring no particular interest or locality. His suffrage did not include all, but the invitation to come within the pale of the constitution was broad and general to all classes.

The Queen, in person, opened the Session on the 3rd of February, and the speech from the Throne recommended the introduction of a Reform Bill. On the 28th of February Mr. Disraeli asked leave to introduce a Reform Bill. It was looked forward to with much interest, but when it was explained, the

disappointment was great. It was proposed in the Bill to give votes in boroughs to persons who possessed property to the amount of £10 per annum in the Funds, Bank Stock, or East India Stock; to persons who had £60 in a savings bank; and to those who had pensions in the naval, military, and civil services amounting to £20 per annum. It was further proposed that the inhabitant of any house whose rent amounted to £20 per annum, graduates, ministers of religion, members of the legal and medical professions, and schoolmasters, should have votes. Messrs. Bright, Fox, and Roebuck contended that the Government Bill made no new concessions to the working classes, and that it still left the power in existing hands. The inhabitants of Birmingham held a meeting, convened by the Mayor, on the 9th March, 1859, in the Town Hall. There were present about 7,000 people. Mr. Bright, upon entering, was enthusiastically cheered. Mr. Bright said that the Government Bill, which they had met to consider, but which was so little deserving of their consideration, could not by any possibility pass into law. He had treated the Government with forbearance and fairness, and were he a Minister, and they in his place, he could not expect greater leniency; but the aspect of things was now changed, as the Government had dared to meddle with the question of Reform in a manner which no man with a spark of respect for the Reform cause could for a moment tolerate. The meeting passed resolutions condemning the Bill, and similar meetings were held in most other towns. The public spoke with no uncertain sound respecting its disappointment, and there was a great commotion throughout the land.

On the 31st March, 1859, the Reform Bill was further discussed in the House of Commons. Mr. Bright, during his speech, said :—

“Is not prosperity conservative? Is not peace conservative? Any energies I possess I have devoted to their advance. I have endeavoured to stand on the rules of political economy, and to be guided by the higher rules of true morality; and when advocating a measure of Reform, larger than some are prepared to grant, I appear in that character, for I believe a substantial measure of Reform would elevate and strengthen the character of our population; that in the language of the beautiful prayer read here every day, it would tend ‘to knit together the hearts of all persons and estates within this realm.’ I believe it would add to the authority of the decisions of Parliament; and I feel satisfied it would confer a lustre, which time could never dim, on that benignant reign under which we have the happiness to live.” (Cheers.)

The Bill was thrown out by a majority of thirty-nine, the result of the voting being received with great cheers. Ministers dissolved Parliament on the 4th of April, and appealed to the country. The Liberal politicians of Rochdale met in their Public

Hall on the 13th of April, to select a candidate to represent the borough in Parliament, and Richard Cobden was their unanimous choice.

"As it happens unfortunately," said Mr. Bright on behalf of his absent friend, "that Mr. Cobden is not now in this country, where he certainly would have been if he had imagined that a general election was so near, I have been requested to say something as it were on his behalf, and to add something more in the way of support to the resolution which is now before us. It is generally admitted by historians that the character of a nation may be got at by reviewing its history and by ascertaining its career during the past. I think it is just as reasonable to believe that the character of any man may be fairly determined by reviewing his past career. Now, it is just on this basis that I would venture to ask my townsmen to support this resolution, and to place Mr. Cobden, a fortnight hence, in the honourable position of their parliamentary representative. He is a man sprung from a family, industrious, and performing the ordinary duties of citizenship in the same way that we mostly find ourselves doing. He was born on a small farm in the county of Sussex—a very large farm, doubtless, in those days. He found himself at a very early age sent up to the City of London—for everybody cannot be employed and cannot have a living on a farm; he found himself sent up to London and employed as a boy in a warehouse in the City. By his intelligence, his attention to his duties, his good conduct, he found himself gradually promoted, until on some occasion or other, I believe rather by accident than by regular appointment, he was seen engaged travelling through the north of England, undertaking the business of the house in whose service he was. He visited this county of Lancaster among others, and he discovered, what many others have discovered before and since, that this county offered great opportunities for enterprise and success in business. Not long afterwards he joined with two, I think, of his fellow-servants connected with the London house to which I have referred, in the business of calico printing, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Clitheroe. He settled in Manchester. He became there very prosperous. He had a large business, and into whatsoever circle he found himself introduced he became immediately a man of some note and of some influence. He did not content himself, happily for his country, in the single pursuit of amassing money. He turned his attention to public wants and public interests. One of the earliest questions to which he devoted himself was to overthrow the exclusive lord-of-the-manor government of the great town of Manchester, and to procure the concession of the charter by which the present municipal government of that city was established. He turned his attention to education next. I dare say there are many now present who recollect his attending a meeting in this town, which was held in the school-room of the Baptist Chapel, in West Street, some twenty-two or twenty-three years ago—a meeting held for the purpose of promoting education in connection with the establishment or the support of British schools. It was in connection with that question, about that time, that I became acquainted with Mr. Cobden, and he spent the night at my father's house after that meeting was held; and from that time to this there has been no cessation, no interruption whatever, of the friendship which has existed between us. It was shortly after that time that the question of the Corn Law began to take a more distinct shape in the minds of the people. The Corn Law, as you know, was protested against in 1815. When it was passed, London was almost in a state of insurrection against it. The House of Commons was surrounded by horse and foot and artillery; the strangers were shut out of the gallery; reporters were excluded, and they who then called themselves your representatives proceeded, as it were in the very darkness of the night, to stab the vital interests of the people of this great country. From that hour, up to 1837 and 1838, there had been always a protest against the Corn Law. An association was formed in Manchester, and Mr. Cobden was one of the earliest members. From 1838 or 1839 up to 1846, when the Corn Law was abolished, for seven years the man whose name is before you—for seven years, when there was a business belonging to him, which, if he had given his personal attention to during those years, would have built him up a large fortune—he devoted the whole of that time, day and night, every waking moment, to the deliverance of his countrymen from the horrible iniquity of the Corn Law. . . . In 1846, when the Government of Sir Robert Peel was unhappily overthrown, and when the Whigs came into office, Lord John Russell wrote to Mr. Cobden a letter, in which he told him that if he did not go abroad, as he heard he was intending to do, but stayed in the country, he should feel it his duty and should be happy to offer him a seat in the

cabinet he was then about to form. Well, Mr. Cobden was never ambitious for place and I have no doubt, for I have heard it more than once from his own lips, that he did not believe it easy, perhaps he did not believe it possible for him, with the strong convictions he has on many questions, and with the honest determination to abide by them—he didn't think it possible, probably, that he could hold office in the cabinet at the time, and keep his conscience void of offence. He did not, therefore, accept the office, but he proceeded to the continent, and, as you know well, wherever he went he was found to be, as he had been in this country, an apostle and missionary on behalf of the great principles of Free Trade. But he did not confine himself abroad to that question. His observant eye discovered the most rotten, the sorest part that exists at this moment in all the governments of Europe. He observed that Europe was going into a kind of political perdition under that extraordinary madness which has brought about armaments more extensive, more costly, and more menacing than have ever existed in any age of the world before. He saw that these armaments drained all the people, and that, proceeding as they were proceeding, they must necessarily render peace in Europe absolutely impossible. He came back to this country; he stated this to the people of England; he pointed out that we were running in the same career; that we were gradually and rapidly increasing our expenditure for armaments which he believed to be unnecessary, and that we must at some time or other retrace our steps, or else this policy would lead to nothing but evil, and even, perhaps, to national convulsion. Well, but since 1846, or since 1847, when Mr. Cobden returned from abroad, what has been his course as a politician, for it is in that character we are considering him? After the Corn Laws were repealed the monopoly in sugar was abolished. That was an enormous relief to the families of England. After that the Navigation Laws were abolished. That has been a remarkable gain to all persons engaged in commerce, and if to them, of course to the whole population. We have had some other important measures carried. One important duty, the excise upon soap, has been abolished. And we have a great change in the character and condition of the public press. There is no portion of the Reform programme which Mr. Cobden has so uniformly, and with so much zeal and force, defended and maintained, as the proposition that the electors of this country ought to have the shelter of the ballot. We recognise in his career a life of service to the people. We behold in him an unvarying industry, a rare intelligence, and a spotless integrity. We have heard him speak with an eloquence logical and simple, convincing and persuasive. . . . For years past, certainly ever since he was member for the West Riding of Yorkshire, in conversation with me, he has always said that if there was one borough more than another he should like to sit for it was the borough of Rochdale. (Cheers.) He said that because he felt that there was a strong hearty Liberal feeling which would back up a man against the aristocratic section of the legislature." (Cheers.)

Sir Alexander Ramsay, the Conservative candidate, who had for two years represented Rochdale in Parliament, retired from the contest, as it was found that some of the Conservatives were in favour of Mr. Cobden, who was ultimately returned unopposed, and the name of Rochdale was raised still higher in the annals of fame, as its distinguished representative and its townsman were known all over the globe for their eminent services.

Mr. Bright visited Birmingham on the 23rd of April and addressed three meetings, at which the electors decided to use every legitimate means to return Messrs. Bright and Schofield again to the House of Commons. Mr. T. D. Acland, a coalition candidate, was brought forward to oppose Mr. Bright. On the 28th of April, the nomination took place in the Town Hall, in the presence of 9,000 persons. It was evident, from the reception given to Messrs. Bright and Schofield as they entered the hall, what would be the result of the contest. Mr. John Ratcliffe,

the Mayor, presided as the returning officer. Mr. Bright, after being nominated, addressed the gathering, remarking :—

“I see to-day that there is intelligence of a most solemn and most awful import to Europe and to humanity—(hear, hear)—that the war (in Italy) which for four months has been coming on with stealthy but not unseen or unheard steps, has at last appeared in all its grimy and devilish proportions.

‘See where the giant on the mountain stands,
His blood-red tresses deepening in the sun!
With death-shot glowing in his fiery hands,
And eye that scorches all it glares upon.’

(Applause.) That is the monster which now appears above the horizon, and threatens to scatter desolation and bloodshed and untold agonies through the homes of countless millions of the population of Europe. (Hear, hear.) What are we to do in this case? (Hear, hear.) Look to the past. I know what we are to do. We are for a time to mediate—when mediation is no use; we are to give a little encouragement here; we are by-and-by to entangle ourselves with one side, in such a manner that the other side will accuse us of hostility and perfidy. (Hear, hear.) Meanwhile some act—it may be of great cruelty or of great atrocity—may be committed by one side, and it may come to us in the form of truth or in the shape of gross exaggeration. If your Government is disposed for war there will be agents of the press in London ready to magnify and distort everything connected with the matter, and to stimulate you by appeals, in some cases to passions that are noble and in others to passions that are base, until at length this country—‘this precious gem set in a silver sea,’ whose people may ride secure amid all the storm and tempest that enwrap and toss the world, will be stimulated to mingle in the strife, and English blood and English treasure, as you know from past history they have done, will again be poured out as if they were water upon every soil of Europe and wherever a battle-field is to be found.” (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

The show of hands was in favour of Messrs. Bright and Schofield by an immense majority. The result of the poll was that 4,623 votes were tendered for Mr. Schofield, 4,492 for Mr. Bright, and 1,569 for Mr. Acland; so that the two former gentlemen were again returned to the House of Commons, to the joy of the majority of the English nation.

The non-electors of Birmingham celebrated the victory by the usual English mode of enjoyment—a feast in their Town Hall, on the 31st of May, 1859. Douglas Jerrold once declared that if an earthquake were to engulf England the English would manage to meet and dine somewhere amongst the rubbish, just to celebrate the event. However, the Birmingham non-electors were anxious to provide food for their mind as well as their body, so they had Mr. Bright amongst them, who gave them some wholesome advice :—

“I am not now less than I was five years ago in favour of peace, as between this country and all other nations of the earth. Let us have unity, friendship, commerce, communication with all. Let us have entangling alliances with none. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Let us feel and give sympathy to sufferers everywhere; let us hold the blood of Englishmen sacred, at least for the purposes of self-defence. (Cheers.) I feel that we are met in somewhat evil times; but let us hope, however, for better days. We may, and I trust we shall, meet again, when the clouds of war have passed away, and when you, whom we are now obliged to address as ‘non-electors,’ may have your names enrolled on the Reform list of your town. If we hope for

better days, if we believe in them, let us honestly, fervently, and disinterestedly work for them; and may we not trust that Heaven at least will grant them?" (Cheers.)

It would be well here to explain that just before the elections commenced a war broke out between France and Sardinia on the one hand, and Austria on the other. The Conservatives took advantage of this, and tried to show that at that particular time it would be unwise to change the Ministry. However, confidence was restored when it was found that the English Government had determined to abstain from all intervention in the war.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE COMMERCIAL TREATY WITH FRANCE.

Resignation of the Ministry—Cobden's Arrival from America—Seat offered in the Cabinet by Lord Palmerston to Cobden—Bright Inspires Chevalier with the Idea of a Commercial Treaty with France—Cobden's Interview with Gladstone, Palmerston, and Russell on the Subject—The New Member for Rochdale Visits his Constituents—Bright at Huddersfield, Liverpool, and London, advocating Reform—The Lords and the Paper Duty—The Commercial Treaty with France Completed by Cobden—Russell's New Reform Bill—Bright at Wakefield, Leeds, and Birmingham—The Abolition of Church Rates.

ALTHOUGH the general election resulted in a gain of twenty seats in favour of the Government, it was not sufficient to keep them in power, for the Liberals numbered 350 and the Conservatives only 302. On the 31st of May Parliament was opened by Royal Commission. The Marquis of Hartington moved an addition to the address in answer to the speech from the Throne, and this procedure amounted to a vote of want of confidence in the Ministry, which was carried by a majority of thirteen. The Ministry resigned, and Lord Palmerston formed a new ministry. Lord Campbell was appointed Lord Chancellor; Earl Granville, Lord President of the Council; the Duke of Argyll, Lord Privy Seal; Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir G. C. Lewis, Home Secretary; Lord John Russell, Foreign Secretary. The office of President of the Board of Trade was offered by Lord Palmerston to Mr. Cobden; the Premier stating in his letter:—

"I have been commissioned by the Queen to form an administration, and I have endeavoured so to frame it, that it should contain representatives of all sections of the Liberal party, convinced as I am that no government constructed upon any other basis could have sufficient prospect of duration, or would be sufficiently satisfactory to the country.

"Mr. Milner Gibson has most handsomely consented to waive all former difficulties, and to become a member of the New Cabinet. I am most exceedingly anxious that you should consent to adopt the same line, and I have kept open for you the office of President of the Board of Trade, which appeared to me to be the one best suited to your views, and to the distinguished part which you have taken in public life. I shall be very glad to see you, and to have personal communication with you, as soon as it may be convenient to you on your arrival in London."

Lord John Russell also wrote to Mr. Cobden, and urged him to accept the appointment.

On the 29th of June Mr. Cobden arrived in Liverpool in the steamer *India*; and a deputation from Rochdale, and about 300 friends assembled on the quay and gave him a hearty greeting

as he landed. After the first congratulations were over he proceeded with his brother, Mr. Charles Cobden, to the Adelphi Hotel. Later on in the day he was presented by the Reformers and Peace Society of Liverpool with congratulatory addresses. The Liverpool Reform Club and members of the Chamber of Commerce also presented addresses, and Mr. Cobden found himself the object of universal interest and expectation. In fact, his four months' travel in America had been one continuous ovation.

Upon landing upon his native shore the news he learned surprised him, for he had not seen the latest papers from England for twenty-five days, nor had he heard anything of the change of Government. A great many of his friends tried to persuade him to accept the offer of Lord Palmerston. He listened to their arguments, but at that time expressed no opinion. A few days after he arrived in London, and at once visited the Premier, who gave him a hearty welcome. After some preliminary conversation Mr. Cobden said to Lord Palmerston :—

“For the last twelve years I have been the systematic and constant assailant of the principle on which your foreign policy has been carried on. I believed you to be warlike, intermeddling, and quarrelsome, and that your policy was calculated to embroil us with foreign nations. At the same time I have expressed a general want of confidence in your domestic politics. Now I may have been altogether wrong in my views; it is possible I may have been, but I put it candidly to you whether it ought to be in your Cabinet, whilst holding a post of high honour and emolument derived from you, that I should make the first avowal of a change of opinion respecting your public policy? Should I not expose myself to severe suspicions, and deservedly so, if I were, under these circumstances, to step from an Atlantic steamer into your Cabinet? Understand, I beg, that I have no personal feelings which prevent me from accepting your offer.”

Lord Palmerston, in combating his objections, remarked :—

“You and your friends complain of a secret diplomacy, and that wars are entered into without consulting the people. Now it is in the Cabinet alone that questions of foreign policy are settled. We never consult Parliament till *after* they are settled. If, therefore, you wish to have a voice in those questions, you can only do so in the Cabinet.”

Mr. Cobden, however, after a long discussion, told the Premier that his mind was irrevocably made up to refuse the offer, and expressed the hope that their personal and political relations might be in future the same as if he were in his Government, and both parted friendly.

Mr. Bright approved of Mr. Cobden's refusal, for he foresaw that the policy of the Ministry would not meet with his friend's acquiescence, and that he would have resigned not many months after; and such would have been the case, for in July of the following year Cobden wrote letters to Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell, complaining of the suspicious and warlike conduct of the Government towards France.

On the motion for going into Committee of Ways and Means, on the 21st of July, Mr. Disraeli commented on the financial policy of the late Conservative Government, which he contended had been successful, and further remarked that no country could continue to raise seventy millions a year, as England was then doing by taxation, in time of peace. More economical management was essential, and the Government ought to prosecute a policy of peace and neutrality. Mr. Gladstone promised that every effort should be made to preserve and strengthen the friendship between England and France, and said that he was anxious to reduce our naval and military armaments when other nations had given similar attestation to their pacific promises. This good sign of the times brought Mr. Bright on to his feet, and he congratulated Mr. Disraeli on having become a convert to the views long advocated by himself and Mr. Cobden.

"What do we now find in the manifesto of the Emperor of the French just received in this country?" said Mr. Bright. "He said he discovered—I am not now using his exact words—that he was making war against the mind of Europe. That is a most important and valuable admission, and I only wish the Emperor had found this out three or six months ago. He says, further, that the war was assuming dimensions with which the interests which France had in the struggle were not commensurate. I am surprised that a man reputed to be so acute did not perceive that he would be exposed to this great danger before he entered upon the war. But the two admissions made in this remarkable and memorable address prove to me that the suspicions which have been so studiously raised in this country as to the future objects of the Emperor of the French are altogether unfounded. I do not believe it possible for either the Emperor of the French or the Emperor of Austria to have returned home with all those scenes of horror, such as we have read of, flitting before their eyes, and I hope before their consciences, and to be now prepared to enter into another struggle—least of all a struggle with a nation like ours, containing 30,000,000 of united people, the most powerful, the richest, and, all things considered, perhaps the best satisfied with their Government of any nation in Europe.

"Besides this, have they not learnt something from the improvements effected in weapons of warfare, and the increased destructiveness of life of which those weapons are now capable? They see now how costly war is in money, how destructive in human life. Success in war no longer depends on those circumstances that formerly decided it. Soldiers used to look down on trade, and machine-making was, with them, a despised craft. No stars or garters, no ribbons or baubles bedecked the makers and workers of machinery. But what is war becoming now? It depends, not, as heretofore, on individual bravery, on the power of a man's nerves, the keenness of his eye, the strength of his body, or the power of his soul, if one may so speak; but it is a mere mechanical mode of slaughtering your fellow-men. This sort of thing cannot last. It will break down by its own weight. Its costliness, its destructiveness, its savagery will break it down; and it remains but for some Government—I pray that it may be ours!—to set the great example to Europe of proposing a mutual reduction of armaments. Our policy in past times—and the right hon. gentleman did not go so far into this question as I could have wished—has been one of perpetual meddling, with perpetually no result except that which is evil. We have maintained great armaments, not, I sincerely believe, because we wanted to conquer or to annex any territory in Europe, but in order that whenever anything happens in Europe we may negotiate, intervene, advise, do something or other becoming what is called the dignity of this great country. . . . I am not accustomed to compliment the noble lord at the head of the Government. I have always condemned the policy which I thought wrong, but which, I have no doubt,

the noble lord thought was best calculated to promote the interests of the country. I believe he was mistaken, and that he was importing into this century the politics of the last; but I do not think it would be possible to select a Minister who could better carry out a policy which would be just to France, and beneficial to ourselves, than the noble lord. Blood shines more, and attracts the vision of man more than beneficent measures. But the glory of such measures is far more lasting, and that glory the noble lord can achieve. I live among the people. I know their toils and their sorrows, and I see their pauperism—for little better than pauperism is the lot of vast numbers of our countrymen from their cradles to their graves. It is for them I speak; for them I give my time in this assembly; and in heartfelt sorrow for their sufferings I pray that some statesman may take the steps which I have indicated. He who can establish such a state of things between France and England will do much to promote the future prosperity of two great nations, and will show that eighteen hundred years of Christian professions are at length to be followed by something like Christian practice."

The French Emperor and his Government were pleased with Mr. Bright's speech, and it inspired M. Chevalier with the idea of a commercial treaty between England and France, and at once he conferred with Mr. Cobden on the subject; ultimately he recommended the member for Rochdale to try to induce the Emperor to consent to a commercial treaty with England. A few weeks after Mr. Cobden had an interview with Mr. Gladstone at Hawarden, and related what had transpired, and said that as he was going to spend a part of the winter in Paris he might be of use in trying to bring about such a desirable treaty. A Cabinet meeting was called, and Mr. Cobden discussed M. Chevalier's notions with Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell; but Mr. Cobden had great difficulty in interesting these two statesmen in political economy and tariffs. They did not, however, object to his proceeding on the mission, and accordingly Cobden visited Paris on the 18th of October.

Before leaving England, Mr. Cobden was welcomed back to public life by a *soirée* at Rochdale, on the 17th and 18th of August, 1859. An immense pavilion was erected on a plot of land at Castlemere, which at the present time is covered by the United Methodist Free Church, William Street. The *soirée* on the 17th was an imposing sight. On a raised platform, Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright were hemmed round in a crescent shape by Messrs. T. Bazley, M.P., Titus Salt, M.P., Frank Crossley, M.P., E. A. Leatham, M.P., W. Sharman Crawford, William Fenton, John Petrie, George Ashworth, H. Kelsall, R. T. Heape, and a host of other gentlemen. The Mayor, Mr. Andrew Stewart, presided. This was the first time since the Reform movement began that Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright appeared together to promote Reform. The occasion was one which, whilst it recalled to mind past labours and past successes, proved that the old energy and fire still existed, and that new victories would be won for the popular cause. The question of

Reform was uppermost in the minds of both speakers and hearers, and of these eminent men it might be said, you could—

“Read their history in a nation’s eyes.”

Mr. Cobden, in a speech of five columns and three-quarters, remarked:—

“Shall we take stock and ask ourselves whether all the old musty predictions and traditions of our diplomacy have been proved to be true on this occasion? They told us that if we did not mingle in European wars we should lose our prestige with the world, that we should become isolated, and that we should lose our power. Well, now, I ask you, whilst the thing is fresh upon our memory and observation, have we lost prestige or power by having abstained from the late war in Italy? (Voices, ‘No.’) On the contrary, do we not know that now the great powers on the Continent, feeling that England is powerful—more powerful than ever in her neutrality—are anxious, are clamorous, are more solicitous, that we should go and take a part in the peaceful conferences that are to take place with a view of securing peace.

. . . Well, gentlemen, I went to London, and before calling on anyone, or receiving anyone, I thought it best to call upon Lord Palmerston, and to express to him exactly my views in the matter; and I may tell you, just as frankly as I have told him, what passed between us. I stated to my Lord Palmerston my case thus: I have been for ten or fifteen years the systematic assailant of what I believe to be your foreign policy. (Hear, hear.) I thought it warlike—not calculated to promote peace or harmony between this country and other countries. I explained to him exactly what my feelings had been in those words; and I said to him, it is quite possible I may have been mistaken in all this; when a man takes an idea and pursues it for ten or twelve years it is very likely that he takes an exaggerated view of his first impressions; but I put it to Lord Palmerston, and now I put it to you, whether, having regard to those opinions, it was fit and becoming in me to step from an American steamer into his Cabinet, and there and then, for the first time, after having received at his hands a post of high honour and great emolument, discover that I had undergone a change in my opinions, and whether I should not be open to great misconstruction by the public at large if I took such a course; and I candidly confess that it was inconsistent with my own self-respect.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright, in a speech of two columns and a half, at the same meeting, remarked:—

“I shall not indulge in any elaborate panegyric with regard to the character and services of our representative. I have had the great privilege of being his political associate, his political brother—(hear, hear)—his personal friend for nearly twenty years. (Cheers.) If there be one man in England whom I would wish to call my representative more than another I have the gratification to-night of being represented by that man. (Cheers.) . . . Now let us turn, as we are turning, I hope, from those frightful themes before us of late, from those pictures and accounts of carnage. (Hear, hear.) I say not who is guilty, I point not to the man or the men—but I hope the time is coming when the finger of mankind and the fierce eyes of human nature will be turned in condemnation against those crowned criminals who thus destroy human life. (Cheers.) Let us turn, I say, from those terrible scenes which have filled the columns of our newspapers. Let us look at home, where we have so much to do. (Hear, hear.) For are not the people here hard worked from morn till night, from January to December, almost from their cradles to their graves? (Cheers.) Have we not all this amongst ourselves—much to instruct, much to help, much to offer justice, and a fair and free field of exertion and competition too? Let us attend to all this and our home affairs, for here lies our duty and here lies our interest. (Cheers.) Our people have been patient in suffering—they have been heroic in their labours and in their struggles, and I count the ambition to be in public life an ambition of the highest kind if it be the ambition to devote every faculty we possess to the true interests and permanent welfare and real elevation of the great and noble people which we go to Parliament to represent.” (Loud and continued cheering.)

On the following evening, the 18th of August, Mr. Cobden

and Mr. Bright addressed about 8,000 persons in the same pavilion, principally on the subject of the suffrage and the ballot. Mr. Stewart, the mayor, again presided.

On the 8th September, 1859, a banquet was held by the Liberals of Huddersfield, to celebrate the return to Parliament of Mr. E. A. Leatham, Mr. Bright's brother-in-law. Mr. M. Hall presided, and about 3,000 persons were present. Mr. Bright's speech filled three columns of the newspapers. He touched on various subjects.

"After the Corn Bill was passed in 1846," remarked Mr. Bright, "you had immediately almost the abolition of the monopoly of sugar, and the abolition of the laws which pretended to protect the shipping of this country, but which interfered most materially with the commerce of the nation. (Hear, hear.) Well, now we are arrived at 1852, when there was a general election, as you recollect, on the first occasion when Lord Derby came into office. Well, what was the majority when the new Parliament assembled? Lord Derby was rejected from office; turned out by a vote of the House by a majority of exactly 19. That showed that the returns to the House of Commons had been nearly balanced, and that ten members transferred from one side to the other would have perpetuated for a time the Government of Lord Derby. Well, come to the next election, 1857, an election which many people in Huddersfield do not look back upon with much satisfaction. (Hear, hear.) In 1857 there was a great cry for a particular statesman, and many men were returned upon that cry, and, so far as numbers went, sitting on his side of the House there was a considerable majority returned to Parliament. That statesman was not wise enough to know how properly to use the majority which he had obtained—(hear, hear)—and twelve months after, when he appeared to be seated on an immovable rock, he was overthrown and his ministry shattered to pieces. (Hear, hear.) Well, then we have had another general election, under the auspices again of Lord Derby, and what has been the result?—that Lord Derby only required six men and their votes—seven men, for six would not have done it, but seven would—from our side of the House to have voted on his side to have given him a majority which would have enabled him, at least for a time, to have maintained himself in power. Now, I have gone through this statement to show you that for many years past, whatever be the opinion of the nation, of the people, the opinion as it is extracted from your present constituencies gives no certain majority in Parliament; and your Government—be it the Government of Lord Derby or the Government of Lord Palmerston, or under any other ministry that the Queen may select—that your Government is opposed by as many opponents as it can count friends, and therefore is almost altogether unable, even if it were willing, to do those things which you, the Liberal people of Huddersfield and of England, wish your Government to do. (Cheers.) Now, the result of this has been that for many years past there have been only what we call 'wasted sessions' of Parliament. I am so distressed and so weary, and, I confess it, so disgusted, and at times so hopeless, that I make up my mind not unfrequently—many times during a session—that I am a fool above all other fools for spending my time, my labour, my life, in that House of Commons; and that it is my duty to myself and to my family to ask for the only office that possibly I may ever hold, that is the Steward of Her Majesty's Chiltern Hundreds—(laughter)—that I may take myself from Parliament and refrain from labour in a field where there is no soil to grow anything—(laughter)—upon which neither the showers fall nor does the sun ever shine with a power to produce it. (Cheers.) All that we have done of late years, as you know, has been to vote with listless apathy millions of money for which you have toiled. We have voted the spending of scores of millions of money that ought under just and economical government to have remained in your pockets. We have put taxes on and we have taken some off; we have shifted an uncomfortable burden from one shoulder to the other—(laughter)—but the burden remains—(hear, hear)—it grows larger—(hear, hear)—and if you bear it at all, if you do not stagger and fall beneath it, it is because your industry, your productiveness, your resolution, your patience surpass those of any other people in any other country in the world." (Cheers.)

So it would appear that the position of these two Prime Ministers during their term of office was anything but profitable to the nation; in fact they are very well described in Cowper's famous lines:—

“Extolled for standing still,
Or doing nothing with a deal of skill,”

The members of the Liverpool Financial Reform Association held a *soirée* in their Philharmonic Hall on the 1st December. Mr. Charles Robertson occupied the chair. Mr. Cobden, who expected to have been present, was at the time in France and detained by ill-health. Nevertheless he was actively engaged negotiating a commercial treaty with France. “The bow cannot possibly stand always bent, nor human nature subsist without recreation.” His labours were arduous and persistent. At the *soirée* Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech, concluding thus:—

“Aristocracy entrenched within the citadel of power, and resting, it may be, on generations of unchallenged rule; monarchy itself, venerable with the willing homage of a thousand years; authority of every kind, must be shaken and will pass away, unless it be based upon the true interests and commends itself to the consciences of the people. (Cheers.) I ask that the Parliament may be made the real representative of the property, the industry, and the intelligence of the nation —(cheers)—that we may be delivered, if possible, from chaotic legislation—from reckless expenditure, and from taxation oppressive, unequal, and unjust. (Cheers.) The monopolists of power reject this demand with scorn. The day will come when it will be made in a louder voice than mine—when this question will be grasped by a ruder hand than mine; and when it is so made, as was the case in 1832, it will be surrendered amid terror and humiliation, for which reason and justice now plead in vain.” (Enthusiastic cheers.)

Lord Teynham, Mr. Ewart, M.P., and Mr. Urquhart, M.P., subsequently addressed the meeting.

A Reform Conference was held at the Guildhall Coffee-House, London, on the 7th of December, to consider the position of the Reform question. A resolution was unanimously passed thanking Mr. Bright for his labours in connection with Parliamentary Reform, and highly approving of his bill upon the subject. Another resolution was carried, declaring that “no measure will be regarded as a settlement which does not include a large extension of the suffrage both in counties and boroughs, an equitable distribution of seats in proportion to the population and property of the constituencies; an assimilation of the electoral laws of England, Scotland, and Ireland; the repeal of the Septennial Act; and the Ballot.” Mr. Bright said:—

“I shall only say if an opportunity comes—and I hope it may not come, because to suppose it would is to suppose the failure of the Government—I shall be prepared to introduce the bill of which you have already heard so much, and which is now in so perfect a state that it could be brought in any night, and which Parliament shall

have an opportunity of fairly discussing, if they are not ready in the coming year in making the concession to be offered by the Government in that direction in which we are all tending." (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

Mr. Gladstone in his budget of 1860 proposed the repeal of the paper-duty, which was a subject Mr. Bright and Mr. Milner Gibson had taken a great interest in advocating for years. Sir Stafford Northcote, on the third reading, moved a hostile motion, and the bill was carried by a majority of only nine. The House of Lords rejected it, and it was contended that as it involved matters of taxation, they had no precedent for doing so. On the 25th of May, Mr. Gladstone moved for a Committee of Inquiry into the subject, which was ultimately carried, and it was found that the House of Lords had infringed the usages of the Commons. Lord Palmerston, however, advised the Commons to be satisfied with a mere declaration of their constitutional privileges. Mr. Bright spoke several times on the point in dispute, and in one speech he said :—

"I fear this Session may, as a consequence, become memorable as that in which, for the first time, the Commons of England have surrendered a right which for five hundred years they had maintained unimpaired. I at least, and those who act with me, will be clear from any participation in this; we shall be free from the shame which must indelibly attach to the chief actors in these proceedings. I protested against the order of reference which the noble lord proposed, though I sat and laboured on the Committee with earnest fidelity on behalf of the House of Commons. I have felt it an honour to sit in this House up to this time, and I hope that hereafter the character of this House will not be impaired by the course which is about to be taken. I have endeavoured to show to my countrymen what I consider to be almost the treason which is about to be committed against them. I have refused to dishonour the memory of such members as Coke and Selden, and Glanville and Pym; and if defeated in this struggle, I shall have this consolation, that I have done all I can to maintain the honour of this House, and that I have not sacrificed the interests which my constituents committed to my care."

The duty, however, this session was not repealed, and indignation at the conduct of the Lords was expressed throughout the country.

Mr. Bright was present at the annual meeting of the Lancashire Reformers' Union, held in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, on the 20th of January, 1860. Mr. G. Wilson presided, and Mr. Bazley, M.P., Mr. R. N. Phillips, Mr. T. B. Potter, and Mr. Alderman Rylands addressed the meeting. Mr. Bright, commenting on a speech of Lord Normanby, delivered in 1793, to the effect that great progressive internal measures were thwarted by the propagation of a fear of the French, said :—

"Now, let us be careful that we are not led away by such fear in this day. France was made the raw-head-and-bloody-bones of that day, and this was successful in turning the people from the consideration of their own affairs. Let us be careful that it has no such effect in our day. Everybody who has heard me will

bear me out in this, that I have never stepped out of my way to speak in complimentary or defamatory terms of the present ruler of France. I have left to him, and the people over whom he rules, all matters appertaining to France alone; but when I see the measures which are being taken—happily frustrated just now—(loud cheers)—when I see the measures being taken, the exact counterpart policy of 1793, I wish for a moment to dwell on this point. If there be any man who complains of the steps by which Louis Napoleon became ruler of France, no man has a right now to quarrel with him on that point, for he was congratulated by the then Foreign Minister, now Prime Minister of this country, almost immediately after, and when he came to England he was received with every demonstration of amity by the sovereign and of enthusiasm by the people. When we entered into a war with a country which was distracted by factions, having an imbecile Foreign Office, he gave you every assistance in the prosecution of that war, out of which you could not have well come without his assistance. Afterwards, what took place? The papers were suggesting changes in the Government of Italy, and especially of Naples, and the English and French Governments withdrew their ambassadors. At that time, judging of the tone of the press, what was the French Government to conclude?—that the English people were ready to assist them, or that if they did not require or get help from England, that at any rate it would not be opposed by England. Well, the war with Austria commenced, and we were first blaming the French ruler for commencing it, afterwards the same people were just as loud in blaming him that it was not carried on much longer. What was the result? I put aside the agony and the bloodshed—when men talk about war they always put that aside, especially those in favour of war, which I am not. (Applause.) What are the results of that war? You have Lombardy delivered from Austria; and some provinces under Dukes and Duchesses, and one under the dominion of the Papal power, forming themselves into one State, anxious to be united to Sardinia. Looking at these things, and all that has taken place since, I say that Louis Napoleon has shown by all he has done, judging of it by what appears in the papers and what one knows besides, he has done all he can to accommodate his policy to that of England, whether it be in Italy, where you sympathise with freedom, or in the distant Empire of China, where you have no right to be as a power carrying on war—(hear, hear)—whether in the right in Europe or in the wrong in China, you find the policy of the French Government most anxious to square itself with the policy of England. . . . And now, after all these alarms, after all these sulphurous leading articles, after all those specimens of wretched oratory poured out by speakers at rifle meetings, after a succession of stimulating letters from the Secretary of War, and hints that you don't know what that man over the water is going to do—(laughter)—after all these things the man over the water is receiving one of your citizens (Mr. Cobden)—(loud cheers, the whole assembly rising)—discussing the great questions of commerce and peace—not matters about which your diplomatists generally concern themselves—receiving information, considering what would be advantageous to the great nation over which he rules, what would be advantageous to the world of which France and England form so great a part; and you find him propounding, in a letter which deserves to be written in letters of gold, a new commercial policy for France. (Applause.) I venture to say that for centuries to come, if the policy marked out be adopted, a blessed renown will attach to the name of the Third Napoleon which will eclipse all that sanguinary glory which encircles the name of the first of the dynasty.” (Here the meeting rose and vociferously cheered.)

In February, 1860, Mr. Cobden completed the commercial treaty with France, and Mr. Gladstone, in introducing his budget on the 10th of the same month, embodying the provisions of the treaty, said :—

“It is a great privilege for any man who, having fifteen years ago rendered to his country one important and signal service, now enjoys the singular good fortune of having it in his power—undecorated, bearing no mark of rank or of title from his sovereign, or from the people—to perform another signal service in the same cause for the benefit of, I hope, a not ungrateful country.”

Many years after, Mr. Bright remarked :—

"Now this was a great work which Mr. Cobden performed, as it were, with his own hand. He went to France; he communicated with his friend M. Chevalier, the eminent French economist; he put himself into communication with the Emperor, who was most honest and very intelligent upon this question. M. Rouher, the French minister, was enabled to commence negotiations, and through many months they went on, interfered with by many obstacles, but by no obstacle in France so great, I believe, as some of the obstacles which came from this country. Finally, the treaty was signed and the triumph was achieved, and I venture to say there is no act of any statesman's life that can be looked back to with more unalloyed pleasure by him who did it, or by his friends who stood by him and commended it, than that great act of the commercial treaty with our neighbouring country of France." (Cheers.)

This splendid service rendered to his country by Mr. Cobden only coming times will be able properly to appreciate, but there can be no doubt that it will add to the lustre which gathers round the name of Richard Cobden.

On the 19th March, 1860, Lord John Russell moved the second reading of the Government Reform Bill. Mr. Bright regarded the bill as simply one for the Extension of the Franchise. It touched only the outside of the Disfranchisement question. It settled nothing, it rather unsettled, as adding another precedent to that of 1832. Mr. Bright noticed the small comparative number of electors it admitted, and advised the House to accept the bill, not as one he himself would have liked, but as the most prudent and fittest to be brought forward at that time. He calculated that by this bill they would not add to the constituency more than 150,000 electors. Not more than 100,000 of the working classes would be enfranchised by the bill. He thought that the bill did not go far enough, and that the parsimony on the part of the House was a mistake—that there was a conscious feeling amongst millions of their countrymen that Parliament did not adequately represent them, and was not just to them, and silently, but surely and inevitably, this opinion was marching on to its triumph. The bill afterwards was withdrawn through the pressure of public business.

Mr. Bright spoke on Reform at a meeting of the Lancashire Reformers' Union, held in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, on the 12th of April. The speech occupied an hour and a half in delivery. Mr. George Wilson presided, and 7,000 persons were present.

"Politically," observed Mr. Bright, "I live and move and have my being only in the hope that I may advance the cause of truth and your cause, if only by a single step. (Cheers.) If I tell you that peace and peaceful industry is your path of wisdom and of greatness, if I say it is your taxes that are spent, your sweat which is pawned, your blood which is shed in war, am I the less your countryman? (Loud cheers and cries of "No.") If your Sunday prayer for peace be not a mockery and offensive in the sight of Heaven, then I am justified in denouncing, as I now do heartily denounce, them who in the Parliament or in your Press are striving to involve the most potent nations of the earth in the crimes and in the calamities of war." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Bright's continual warnings of the evils of war and the loss resulting therefrom have had, no doubt, a beneficial effect, and kept England of late years from further entangling herself in warfare; for he has a clear perception of England's follies as well as her good qualities.

While Mr. Cobden was negotiating the treaty with France, Lord Palmerston, on the 23rd of July, informed the House of Commons that the Government, with respect to the recommendations of the National Defence Commission for fortifying the dockyards and establishing a central dépôt for arms and stores, proposed that a vote be taken in the meantime for £2,000,000 to be charged on the Consolidated Fund, and raised by annuities for a term not exceeding thirty years. The total outlay, it was expected, would be eleven or twelve millions. Mr. Bright stated that during his seventeen years' experience in that House he had never known an instance of a question of such magnitude and importance being brought before it without notice, and of such a resolution being proposed for adoption on the same evening. In all probability the proposition would involve an expenditure of twice £12,000,000; and he protested against being entrapped into such a resolution. The debate was adjourned to the 2nd of August, when Mr. Bright again delivered a long and masterly speech, during which he said:—

“There may be enemies abroad; but I can find nobody who can point them out. I can, however, point out an enemy at home, and that is this insane and wicked policy, which requires that you should abstract from the labour and the industry of the people of England this enormous, incredible, and ruinous sum from year to year. What is the result in every other country? If somebody had told the Minister of Louis XIV. that his extravagance would end in disaster to France, he would have answered them, as I shall be answered, ‘The country is rich enough,—the glory of France is worth more than your sordid considerations of pounds, shillings and pence. France must keep a great position in Europe—there is no burden which France will not easily by its elasticity raise itself under and support.’ But do we not know that in another generation his family became exiles; the aristocracy of his country was overthrown; another branch of his family has been exiled, and the kingdom which he did so much to ruin has been subjected to sixty years of anarchy and recurring revolution! This is the story history tells of other countries as well as of France; and if we pursue the same course, I fear the history which will be written in the future of our time will be exactly like that which has been written of France and of other countries. You will have an exiled royal family, you will have an overthrown aristocracy, and you will have a period of recurring revolution; and there is no path so straight, so downward, so slippery, so easily travelled to all these misfortunes, as the path which we are now following, year after year, adding to these enormous expenses, until the time will come when there will be some change throughout the country, when men will open their eyes, will ask who has deceived them, defrauded them, pillaged them. And then you will have to pay the penalty which all men in the upper classes of society in every country have had to pay when they have not maintained the rights of the great body of the people in this particular, and when they have not performed the duties which devolved upon them as the governing classes of the country. It is because I hate this policy—because I condemn this expenditure—because I see that it will lead to more expenditure, and to the wider prevalence of this policy, that I oppose with all my heart the resolution

of the noble lord; and in doing that, I feel the strongest conviction in my conscience that I am doing my duty, not less to the people of whom I am one, than to the monarchy under which I live."

The measure, however, was carried by a large majority, so alarmed were the members of the House of Commons by the invasion fever and hobgoblin arguments.

Mr. Bright wrote a letter to a Blackburn manufacturer on the 3rd of November, in reply to a complaint "that education, literary and religious, has failed to teach the working classes wisdom in relation to their own interest." Mr. Bright's reply was very lengthy, and in one part of it he stated:—

"I have never denied the legal or the moral right of workmen or employers to combine; but I believe there is not one case in a hundred where it is wise to exercise this right. And looking at the consequences of the strikes we have seen in this county, and indeed throughout the country, it is amazing that so many men of sense, so many men competent in works of skill and ingenuity, should take any part in them. I do not expect in our time that these deplorable transactions will come to an end, but I am persuaded that they would occur much more rarely, and be attended with much less of bitterness and of that obstinate folly which now so often distinguishes them, if the wall of partition between classes were broken down by the admission of the great 'labour interest' into the rights of citizenship. Then the same questions would interest us all; the same grievances, where grievances exist, would be seen to affect us all; and instead of being, as we now are, two nations in one country, having different ends and adverse sympathies, we should have objects and purposes in common, to the incalculable and permanent gain of the whole people."

In November Mr. Cobden contemplated leaving Paris to spend the winter at Algiers, as he was still suffering from hoarseness, which became worse as winter advanced, and made him long for the sunshine and warmth of the south. Mr. Bright was wishful to see him before leaving Paris, and accordingly paid him a visit, and a few days after they had an interview with the Emperor of the French. On that occasion Napoleon asked Mr. Cobden if he was satisfied with the treaty? Mr. Cobden replied, that with the exception of the iron he did not complain. The Emperor complimented Mr. Bright on the course he had taken in always trying to promote an amicable feeling between both nations. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden urged the Emperor to abolish the passport system in his country which caused so much unnecessary trouble, and Napoleon granted their request. On the 9th of December the member for Rochdale, accompanied by his wife and eldest daughter, left for Algiers, where he remained until the following May. Before leaving Algiers he received a letter from Lord Palmerston, offering on behalf of Her Majesty to create him a baronet, or to be made a privy councillor, for the services he had rendered in negotiating the treaty with France. Mr. Cobden in his letter replied that:—

"Whilst entertaining the same sentiments of gratitude towards the Queen which I could have felt if I had accepted the offer you have been so good as to make me

in her name, I must beg permission most respectfully to deny myself the honour which Her Majesty has graciously proposed to confer on me. An indisposition to accept a title being in my case rather an affair of feeling than of reason, I will not dwell further on the subject.

"With respect, however, to the particular occasion for which it is proposed to confer on me this distinction, I may say that it would not be agreeable to me to accept a recompense in any form for my recent labours in Paris. The only reward I desire is to live to witness an improvement in the relations of the two great neighbouring nations which have been brought into more intimate connexion by the Treaty of Commerce."

Mr. Bright was present at the *soirée* of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institute, which was held in the Corn Exchange of that town on the 20th of November. Mr. E. A. Leatham, M.P., presided.

"It seems to me," remarked Mr. Bright, "that there is nothing that is so entirely neglected in the education of all classes in this country as the consideration of the principle upon which, I believe, the permanent prosperity and peace of nations or commonwealths are based. (Hear, hear.) If these were principles that referred merely to our days or to this year I should scarcely think it worth while to refer to them, but they appear to me to refer to all countries, to all times and people, whatever circumstances they may be living under; and that they are more infinitely important than the ephemeral struggles and triumphs which attend the ambition of the statesman with whom our time and thoughts are sometimes so greatly occupied. One of our poets has said—I must apologise to him (though he is not here, and perhaps is not living) if I do not quote him correctly, but he is reported to have asked or exclaimed—

'How few of all the ills which men endure
Are those which kings and lords can make or cure.'

Now, if I were disposed to be sharp and short, and not disposed to argue the question, I might answer him by a couplet from another of our poets, who has said, speaking of his own order—

'Poets, of all men, least regret
Increasing taxes and the nation's debt.'

(Laughter.) Now, I am prepared to contradict this saying of the poet which I first quoted. I say that liberty, and wealth, and happiness, in the progress of every people, meet with a thousand obstacles from laws which are based sometimes upon selfishness, but I believe much more frequently upon ignorance of the true interests of the nation. (Hear, hear.) The science of political economy, although it has been proclaimed by various learned and able men for nearly a hundred years, is a science which yet is absolutely in its infancy, and it is an entire mistake to suppose that it is only the members of mechanics' institutions who are well informed upon this science. . . . There can be no doubt whatever, that as we go on, every improvement that is made in machinery or in agriculture adds to our power of production, and ought to add to our comfort. (Cheers.) In my opinion it ought to lessen human labour and increase human enjoyment. (Hear, hear.) But if through bad principles of legislation, if through error of Government, public resources are wasted, if a vast quantity of our industry is misdirected; if there be these great blunders made, you may have rich men, and you may have rich families, but you may rely upon it the multitude will still be poor, and the little comforts they have will still be precarious. (Cheers.) Now, I want us to study these subjects more than we have done before, to enable us to see clearly that we may govern ourselves more wisely. I believe that if we do so we may raise mankind to a much higher level, we may give greater glory to our country, we may dispense greater happiness amongst the families of which it is composed, and we may do that which is not a little thing—we may do something to 'justify the ways of God to man.'" (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

Mr. Bright, during the session, spoke in the House on the

ever troublesome question of Turkey, with some good effect, remarking :—

“The question of Constantinople, which is supposed to be the great political question, is surely not an insuperable difficulty. It cannot be said that Heaven permitted a great city to grow up in a favoured spot to form continually a bone of contention between the nations of Europe, or that the statesmen who have settled so many questions cannot suggest what can be done with this. What I am myself most anxious for is that England should hold itself aloof from that policy—should, in point of fact, repudiate it altogether as a mistake, that the integrity of the Turkish Empire is to be maintained, and that, not this power, but the pretended power—the feebleness and the dignity of the Sultan—is to be supported; and that all this is to be done again at the expense of the taxes drawn from the English people, and of the blood of Englishmen squandered like water, in the endeavour to do that which nature says is impossible, and that all experience tells us we must fail in if we ever attempt.”

A careful study of the speeches of Mr. Bright will reveal the fact that his chief aim has been to improve the condition of the working class; that England should be governed well and raised in the scale of nations. His idea of a happy nation is very aptly described by Confucius :—

“Where spades grow bright, and idle words grow dull,
Where gaols are empty, and where barns are full;
Where church-paths are with frequent feet outworn;
Law court-yards weedy, silent, and forlorn;
Where doctors foot it, and where farmers ride;
Where age abounds, and youth is multiplied;
Where these signs are, they clearly indicate
A happy people and well-govern'd state.”

Mr. Bright was present at the inauguration of the Leeds Working Men's Parliamentary Association, which was held in the Town Hall, Leeds, on the 11th of December. Mr. Alderman Middleton occupied the chair. Mr. Edward Baines, M.P., and Mr. E. A. Leatham, M.P., also addressed the meeting.

“I ask myself, why this dread of the people?” remarked Mr. Bright. “I live among them. A man accosted me only on Saturday at the railway station, and putting his hand on my shoulder (he was a working man), he said, ‘Ah, well, we were lads together;’ and then he made a remark which was equally true—‘but it is a long time since.’ (Laughter.) I have lived amongst them all my life—I never had any distrust of them, I never affected any perfection in them any more than I found it elsewhere or conceived it to exist in myself, but I say that for those qualities that go to make a people, that are requisite to fulfil the duties of citizenship, the working classes of this country need not bow the head before the highest in the land. . . . Shall Englishmen alone be dazzled with what they see abroad, and forget altogether the duty they owe to themselves? Shall seventy-five millions of pounds sterling in taxes—seventy-five millions, the produce of human labour—shall this be annually raised and spent, and shall six millions of Englishmen, who have had the main power in raising it, have no further concern in the matter? Shall every working man give, as I believe he does give, at least two hours extra per day of toil and of sweat to support a Government whose policy he can in no degree influence, and which shuts him out from the commonest rights of citizenship, and spurns him as though he were but a wild beast in human form. (Hear, hear, and loud cheers.) I tell you honestly I cannot believe it. I know there is amongst the people of this country an overwhelming preponderance in favour of Parliamentary Reform. (Cheers.) It will come. (Cheers.) It may be delayed, but it cannot be prevented. (Hear, hear.) It will come by honest, enlightened, and safe steps, such as we

recommend, or it will come hastened by some great accident which none of us can now foresee, and may bring about changes and feelings which may shake our political and social fabric to its base. (Hear, hear.) Now, honestly, it is because I dread disorder, because I know that resistance to just demands is the fertile parent of confusion in every state; it is because I wish England to be great, and glorious, and free, and moral—(cheers)—that I urge the working classes amongst my countrymen, the unfranchised millions, to insist upon their just rights, and it is for those causes that I counsel the ruling classes to grant those rights, although it may be that my counsel may be in vain.”

Mr. Bright met his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 29th of January, 1861, and there were not fewer than 6,000 present. Mr. Arthur Ryland, the mayor, presided.

“The House of Commons,” observed Mr. Bright, “of late years, had presented itself to them as a body caring little for the great internal interests of the country, reckless and profligate in its expenditure; and if that were so, and if he could judge of what was passing in the public mind, he was forced to the conclusion that the question of taxation and expenditure was that to which men were looking at the present time with great interest. The past year had been one of unusual prosperity, and heavy burdens had been borne without much complaint. But there were clouds, particularly in the west, which promised a great change of circumstances, and the question was passing from mouth to mouth—how long will the Chancellor of the Exchequer be able to raise seventy millions in taxes on the people of this country?”

He had never heard the feeblest protest raised in the House of Lords against the extravagance of the Government. It was worth their while to know that, with very few exceptions, the members of the present peerage owed their peerages to creation within the last 100 years. The origin of them came from the rotten borough system: any man who could get four, five, or six seats in the House of Commons at his command to serve the Government of his day, could, by ways known to such a gentleman—(laughter)—procure to himself in all probability to be made a peer. He told them this to show that when they were asked to examine into the conduct of the House of Peers they were not to look at it as a thing so old as the monarchy of England. They might single out a few families who had come down from remote times, the majority of whom had generally shown themselves considerate and just to the people of the country; but all the modern peerage was bred in the slime and corruption of the rotten borough system, and they need not look to a House so constituted for any great anxiety to save the pockets of the nation.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright had very little faith in the House of Lords as a source of justice to the working-class, as he judged the peers by past experience, which reminded him of

“The dew of justice, which did seldom fall,
And when it dropt the drops were small.”

“I am of opinion,” continued Mr. Bright, “that a tax, although the working men appear to pay none of it, is borne mainly by them, because the sum is withdrawn from the fund which ought to employ them, and they are sufferers indirectly to the amount of the taxation which is wasted. When I look round at the condition of things in this country, I wonder and I grieve. I see more work, I believe, done than by any equally numerous people in any country in the world. I see at the same time a wonderful benevolence and charity between man and man. There was never a time since the beginning of the Christian era, and there never was a country in which so many men and women were employed in kind and benevolent and charitable and Christian labours for the benefit of their fellow-creatures. (Cheers.) There is benevolence abounding, but benevolence cannot do what we wish to be done. There is such a thing as

‘With one hand put
A penny in the urn of poverty,
And with the other take a shilling out.’

(Laughter.) And that may be done without any dishonest or improper intention. . . . I hold that we who hold these sentiments are the true Conservatives in the

country. Our past policy has loaded us with debt. It has destroyed millions of families. It has desolated millions of homes. It has added immeasurably to the chaos, and infinitely to the sufferings of Europe. I would reverse this policy. I would practise a religious abstention from all the tumults and quarrels which arise upon the Continent of Europe. I would give, if I could, to industrious people the full enjoyment of the wealth they create. I would ask, with one of our old poets—

‘What means the bounty of all-gracious Heaven—
That, persevering still, with open hand
It scatters good, as in a waste of mercy,’

if it be not that the common children of all-gracious Heaven should enjoy this full bounty which is offered to them? As you have revolutionised your commercial legislation, revolutionise your foreign policy—bring it to the standard of common sense and common morality. Permit the people for whom my very breast bleeds when I see the sufferings which so many of them endure—permit them to enjoy that which they created. The crown will gain fresh lustre; institutions that are good will be more stable; and this nation, to its humblest homestead, will be ever the more contented and the more happy.” (Prolonged cheering.)

In the session of 1861, Sir John Trelawney introduced a Bill for the second time for the abolition of Church Rates. On the 27th of April, in the previous session, Mr. Bright supported the Bill in an able speech, in which he said:—

“I live in a town in which contests about Church-rates have been carried on in past years with a vigour and determination, and, if you like it, with an animosity which has not been surpassed in any other part of the kingdom. Hon. gentlemen opposite, who profess to be in favour of what is called a stand-up fight, will be glad to hear that nothing could exceed the activity of their friends in that parish, nothing could exceed the profuseness with which they were willing to pay for a contest, in order that all might have to contribute to a Church which at that time they themselves were not willing adequately to support. The very last contest of this kind cost the Church party in the parish as much money as, if invested at the common rate of interest, would have supported the fabric of the Church for ever. [A cry of ‘How much?’] I can tell the hon. gentleman what was the estimate formed, which I believe was never disputed, and which, judging from the expenditure on the other side, was not, I should say, very inaccurate. I believe that the expenditure would not be less than from £3,000 to £4,000. It is a large parish, probably ten miles square, and contains nearly 100,000 inhabitants; and I need not tell hon. members that there is no class of people in England more determined and more unconquerable, whichever side they take, than are the people of the county from which I come. What was the result of that struggle? The result was that the Church-rate was for ever entirely abolished in that parish. I have since seen several lists of candidates for the churchwardenship put forth by Churchmen, each of which claimed support upon the ground that they would never consent to the reimposition of a Church-rate; and the parish has been for many years upon this question a model of tranquillity. It would not be enough that it should be a model of tranquillity if the result had followed which the learned gentleman foretold in such dolorous language: that religion would be uncared for, and that the Gospel would no longer be preached to the poor; but I will undertake to say that since that contest, that venerable old parish church has had laid out upon it, in repairing and beautifying it, from money subscribed, not altogether, but mainly by Churchmen ten times—ay, twenty times—as much as was ever expended upon it during a far longer period of years in which Church-rates were levied. During that period there were discussions about the graveyard, about the hearses, about the washing of the surplices, about somebody who had to sweep out the church. There were discussions of all sorts, of a most irritating and offensive character. The clock which was there for the benefit of the public no longer told the time, and, in fact, there was evidence of that sort of decay to which the learned gentleman has pointed as the inevitable result of the abolition of Church-rates. Since the rate ceased to be levied the clock has kept time with admirable fidelity, and to such an extent has the liberality of Churchmen gone that very lately they have put up another clock in a neighbouring church. I believe that in the parish of Roch-

dale the Church people have received far more benefit from the abolition of the Church-rate than the Dissenters have. They have found out, what they never knew before, that when placed upon the same platform as Dissenters, and obliged to depend upon their own resources, they are as liberal and zealous as other sects. I wish that the learned gentleman had told us, and I hope that some one who may follow him will do so, how it happens that year by year there has been growing in this House a power in opposition to Church-rates, while at the same time there has been less animosity throughout the country upon this question. I believe it has arisen from the growth of a better feeling on both sides, and from the fact that year by year there have been secessions from the supporters of Church-rates throughout the country, and that more and more without the action of Parliament the principle embodied in the clauses of the bill of my hon. friend has come to be acted upon. Now, what is the real point between us?—because I believe that hon. gentlemen opposite will agree with me, that if it could be done it would be better that this question should be for ever disposed of. What is the question at issue between us? Does any man dispute the evils that have arisen? The right hon. and learned gentleman has, in a speech of great vigour, endeavoured to throw ridicule and contempt upon the great body of the Dissenting population of this country. ['No, no!'] Well, at any rate, he has not refrained from expressions of harshness towards those whom he charges with being the movers in this question. But does he believe, or do any of you believe, that if those persons did not in the main possess the confidence of the great body of the Dissenters, they could in a week, a fortnight, or a month, stir them up from one end of the country to the other, and bring to your table the signatures of 500,000 of your countrymen? [Cries of '600,000.'] I am reminded that the number is 600,000, but in a matter of this kind I am not particular to 100,000 or less. I say, then, is there any one here who disputes the evils which have arisen from these discussions? I confess that I have sometimes wished that I could speak in this House, even if it were for only one half hour, in the character of a member of the Church of England. If I could have done that I should have appealed to the House in language far more emphatic and impressive than I have ever been able to use as a Dissenter, in favour of the abolition of this most mischievous and obnoxious impost. . . . The dissensions to which I have referred have prevailed, prevail still, and cannot terminate as long as this impost exists. What is its natural and inevitable result? It must be to create and stimulate the pride of the supremacy in the dominant Church, and at the same time produce what I shall call the irritation of subjugation and injustice on the part of that great portion of the people who support their own ministers and places of worship, and who think that they ought not to be called upon to support those of any other sect or church. Now, is it necessary that this should continue? I often have occasion in this House to give hope to hon. gentlemen opposite. They are probably the most despairing political party that any country ever had within its borders. They despair of almost everything. They despaired of agriculture. Agriculture triumphs. They despair of their Church, yet whenever that Church has been left to its own resources and to the zeal of its members its triumph has been manifest to the country and to the world. Are you made of different material from the five millions of people who go to the Dissenting chapels of England and Wales? You have your churches—I speak of the old ones, not of those recently erected by means of voluntary contributions—you have your churches, which you call national, and you have them for nothing. You have your ministers paid out of property anciently bequeathed or entrusted to the State for their use. In that respect you stand in a far better position for undertaking what, if Church-rates are abolished, you must undertake, than do the great body of your Dissenting brethren. Have you less zeal, have you less liberality, than they have? Do not you continually boast in this House that you are the owners of the great bulk of the landed property of the country? Are you not the depositaries of political power, and do you not tell us that when a Dissenter becomes rich he always walks away from the chapel into your church? If this be so, am I appealing in vain to you, or reasoning in vain with you, when I try to encourage you to believe that if there were no Church-rates the members of your church and your congregations would be greatly improved, and that, as has taken place in the parish in which I live, your churches would be better supported by your own voluntary and liberal contributions than they can ever be by the penny per pound issuing from the pockets of men who do not attend your church, and who are rendered ten times more hostile to it by the very effort to make them contribute to its support. I believe that Church-rates must before long be abolished. Hence, I wish to afford some hope and consolation, if I can, to hon. gentlemen opposite. Mr. Osborne and Mr. Bunting, from whom the right hon. and learned member so

largely quoted, themselves belong to a body that has done marvels in this country in erecting chapels, paying ministers, establishing schools, raising the dead, if you like—for men who were dead to religion have been made Christians—and they have preached the Gospel to the poor in every county, I might almost say in every parish, in the kingdom. Yet they have not come to Parliament for grants of money; and, although they have often come to me and others for contributions to their chapels and schools, they have never had any force of law to enable them to raise their funds. Throughout England and Wales what would be the condition of your population, your religious establishments, your education, if it were not for the liberality of those sects of whom the right hon. and learned gentleman thinks fit to speak in disparaging terms? . . . I should like to ask hon. gentlemen opposite to look to a point in respect to which their Church is at a great disadvantage as compared with Dissenting congregations. I am in a position to observe both of them with great impartiality, because I belong to a sect which is very small, which some people say is decaying, although I believe its main principles are always spreading. I have no particular sympathy with Wesleyans, Independents, or Baptists, any more than I have with the congregations which assemble in your churches. But have you not observed in London, and more particularly in the country, where you are more intimately acquainted with the circumstances—have you not observed, that among the congregations of Dissenting bodies there is a greater activity in all matters which belong to their churches, and to objects which they unite together in promoting as a religious community? Do not you find that from the richest and the most influential man who enters a chapel on a Sunday to the humblest of the congregation there is, as it were, a chain of sympathy running through them all, which gives to them a great strength, which combines them together, which influences the humblest and the highest for good, and which gives to the congregation a power which is found to be greatly less existent in a congregation of the Established Church? I have spoken of this to many persons who differ from me on all these questions of Church establishments, Church-rates, and the like; but I never spoke to any man in the habit of attending the Established Church who did not admit to me that it is one of the things they most deplore, that among the five hundred persons, more or less, who attend any particular church, there is infinitely less sympathy, co-operation, union, and power of action than is evinced among the various Dissenting communities in this country almost without exception. But if you had none of these rates to levy by law you would be placed—and it would be a most material advantage—in the same position as are the congregations of Dissenting bodies. You would be obliged, of course, in the management of your congregational affairs, to consult the members in general; you would have your monthly or quarterly meetings; and thus you would know who were your neighbours in church, and you would be united together, as Dissenting congregations are. And I maintain that your religious activity and life for all purposes of missionary work at home and abroad would be greatly increased and strengthened; and so far your congregations, your ministers, and your churches would be great gainers. Some hon. gentlemen will say that I am a violent partisan on this question, and that I have partaken of the animosity which I stated to have existed in the parish in which I live. I do not deny that in times past I have taken a warm, and it may be occasionally a too heated, part in the contests and discussions on this question; but, so far as I am concerned, the feelings engendered by these strifes have been swept away; I am older than I was then; I make great allowance for men's passions, as I ask that they should make allowance for mine. This question has now come to a crisis; and I ask the House to consider whether it would not be to the advantage of the Church, of morality, religion, and the public peace, that it should now be set at rest once and for ever. The right hon. and learned gentleman—it is one of the faults of a high classical education—following the example of the right hon. gentleman who delighted us all with a brilliant but most illogical speech last night, affrighted us with an account of what took place under the democracies of Greece, and asks us to follow the example of those who were believers in the paganism of ancient Rome. He says, Did not the Roman emperors, consuls, and people go in procession after the vile gods and goddesses which they worshipped? It is true they did, and I hope the right hon. and learned gentleman regrets by this time that he asked us to follow an example of that kind. Rome has perished, and the religion which it professed has perished with it. The Christian religion is wholly different, and if there be one thing written more legibly than another in every page of that Book on which you profess that your Church is founded, it is that men should be just one to another, kind and brotherly one to another, and should not ask of each other to do that which they are not willing

themselves to do. I say that this law of Church-rates is a law which violates, and violates most obviously and outrageously, every law of justice and of mercy which is written in that Book, and it is because I believe it does so that I am certain that it never can be of advantage to your Church, if your Church be a true Church; and, believing that, and feeling how much the interests and sympathies and wishes of millions of our countrymen are in favour of the abolition of this impost, I ask you to do what I am now ready to do—to give a cordial support to the third reading of this bill of my hon. friend.”

The division this time was even, and the Speaker had to give a casting vote, which he did against the Bill, remarking that, so far as he could collect the opinion of the House, it was in favour of some settlement of this question different from that contained in the present Bill, and he was not willing to take upon himself the responsibility of the proposed change. On the 31st of July, 1868, Mr. Gladstone succeeded in passing his Compulsory Church-rate Abolition Bill, which annihilated a rate that had caused grievances in many towns in England.

Mr. Bright was very much disappointed when he found that the Royal Speech at the opening of the Session of 1861 had no reference to Parliamentary Reform, and he remarked to the House that when the present Government came into power most explicit pledges, public and private, had been given on the subject of Reform, and he asked whether it was right that the representation should be amended or not, and, if right, whether it was not better that it should be done now. Mr. White moved that a paragraph should be added to the address on the subject, but it was negatived by 124 to 46.

On the 15th of April, 1861, Mr. Gladstone, in his budget, proposed to apply the surplus to the reduction of the income-tax by one penny per pound, and to abolish the duty on paper. Mr. Baring, Sir S. Northcote, Mr. S. Fitzgerald, and Mr. Horsman spoke strongly against Mr. Gladstone's proposition. Mr. Bright, in defending the budget, said:—

“Sir, I have seen a good deal of party contest in this House. I have no objection to the greatest efforts of the greatest party, if those efforts are guided by an honest desire for the public good; but I observe that these party contests are generally fought in a field which, as one of our own writers and poets has described it, is ‘a field of ambition in which truly the labourers are many, but the harvest is scarcely worth the carrying away.’ I despise those triumphs. I scorn altogether those laurels. (Cheers.) If I contended here for the mastery, if I looked for fame, if I desired to be remembered hereafter in connection with the great struggles on the floor of this House, it should be by associating my name directly with measures which I felt in my conscience it was wise and just in Parliament to give, and which it would be a blessing for the people to receive. (Loud cheers.) Sir, I have looked at this budget, I hope, with an impartial and an honest eye. I believe that it meets these two conditions—that it is just for Parliament to pass, and that it will be beneficent towards the people for whom it is intended; and on these grounds alone I shall give it my hearty support.” (Cheers.)

The Government were successful in carrying the propositions,

and the Royal assent was given on the 12th of July for repealing the Paper Duty.

Lord Clarence Paget, on the 11th of March, in introducing the Navy Estimates, proposed the construction of iron-cased vessels similar to the French "La Gloire" and the English "Warrior."

"Surely, after what was done in consequence of the panic excited when the right hon. member for Droitwich (Sir John Packington) was at the Admiralty," said Mr. Bright on the subject; "and considering that this is a time of peculiar pressure, when a general discontent is arising in different parts of the country at this enormous expenditure, the Government might easily have reduced the military estimates of the year by four or five millions! And I do not believe there is a man in the kingdom, with the slightest knowledge of politics, who could imagine that we were not quite as safe as we shall be when all this money has been voted."

At this time members of Parliament were excited with the fabulous accounts of the increase of the French navy, and the money was granted.

As soon as Mr. R. Cobden arrived in England, after completing the commercial treaty with France, his constituents wished to congratulate him on the noble work he had performed, and accordingly he appeared at a public meeting on the 26th June, 1861, in company with Mr. Bright, Mr. Thomas Bazley, M.P., Sir Charles Douglas, M.P., Mr. G. Wilson (Manchester), Mr. John Platt (Oldham), and a large number of local gentlemen, Conservatives as well as Liberals. The room in which the meeting assembled—the largest then available—was the ground floor of Messrs. Kelsall and Kemp's warehouse in Baillie Street, and it was computed that the audience numbered at least 5,000 persons, who seemed highly pleased with the work which had been completed by their distinguished member, and their "hearts spoke content in the smiles of their face." Upwards of sixty reporters were present. The Mayor (Joseph H. Moore) presided. Mr. Cobden, in a speech which extended over five columns and a quarter, stated:—

"I have been occupied for nearly the last eighteen months abroad, partly in pursuit of public duty, and partly in quest of health. (Hear, hear.) I have been, as your worthy mayor has stated, engaged in arranging a commercial treaty with France. I have been, as you are aware, honoured with the confidence of our Sovereign—(applause)—and aided by colleagues whose services in this matter I would not for a moment appropriate to myself. (Hear, hear.) I have been endeavouring to make out arrangements that shall lead to two countries peculiarly designed by Providence to confer mutual benefits upon each other, but which, owing to the folly and perhaps wickedness of man, have been for centuries rather seeking to injure and destroy each other—I have been seeking to form arrangements by which two countries shall be united together in mutual bonds of dependence, and, I hope, a future peace. (Cheers.) It has been truly stated by the mayor that France has been hitherto, as a nation, attached to those principles of commercial restriction which we in England have but lately released ourselves from, and which have cost ourselves thirty years of pretty continuous labour and the services of three or four most eminent statesmen, in order to bring us to the present state of comparative freedom

of commerce. (Cheers.) The French, on the contrary, had hardly taken a single step in this direction; it was left for the present Emperor, and he alone had the power to accomplish it, with the aid of his Minister of Commerce, who for eighteen months has scarcely given himself twenty-four hours of leisure—(hear, hear)—it was left to them to accomplish in France, in the course of a couple of years, what it has taken us in England at least thirty years to effect.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright next delivered a lengthy speech, and touched on various subjects.

“What is this money?” he remarked. “Are we not all sensible when we are without it how much we could do that would be agreeable if we had it? (Laughter.) Are we not all sensible that what we call money is merely a thing by which we obtain or exchange houses and furniture, and food and clothing, the necessaries, the comforts, the luxuries of life, by which our children obtain education, and by the possession of which, more or less, we have a much greater chance of becoming intelligent, and, I believe, also moral and religious. (Hear, hear.) That is what is meant by money. But what is it that divides classes in this country—those who have nothing from those who have much? If you see one portion of the people doomed to incessant labour, to a precarious position, often to much misery, and another portion having abundant leisure, abundant enjoyments, and security in the possession of those enjoyments which two millions are denied, where is the difference but that the one class is in the possession of money and what money can obtain for them? (Hear, hear.) Now, taxes are money taken from the people. I recollect seeing a caricature, some twenty-five years ago, in which two or three rather over-fed footmen were discussing this question, and one asked the other, ‘What’s taxes, Thomas?’ (Laughter.) Well, probably Thomas did not know, because in that particular household the master paid the taxes, and he did not see the money passing from the master’s hand to the tax-gatherer. . . . Now if we could have in this room the oldest man in Rochdale, I don’t know what age he is, but if he were eighty-five years of age, for example, and we were to go back to his youngest days, when he was a little toddling fellow of two or three years old, and imagine at that time his little hand had been in the grasp of the bony hand of the man at that time as old as he is now, these two lives would carry us back to the time of what is called the ‘glorious revolution,’ when the Stuarts were finally driven from England and a new dynasty and a new system were established. At that time the revenue of the kingdom was 2,000,000 a year, and we had no national debt. (Hear, hear.) I am not going into details upon this matter, but when in two lifetimes we have made the progress in this department that we have, at least we ought to be excused if we make a little progress in some other department. But in sixty years from that time the revenue of 2,000,000 had grown to 20,000,000, and the national debt had become a debt of 140,000,000. (Hear, hear.) In sixty years further, and less than sixty years further, the 20,000,000 of taxes had grown to be 70,000,000 of taxes, and the 140,000,000 of debt had grown to be at least 840,000,000. (Shame.) Now, I shall not go through all the wars and the wonderful political blunders and crimes by which this was brought about; but I will undertake to say that, looking at the history of our country, looking at the great condition of the body of the people, whether agricultural labourers, or weavers, or miners, or whatsoever they may be of the humble classes of society, the class that has the least money, I will undertake to say that this class has derived no real benefit from the policy which has involved us in this vast expenditure, this enormous taxation, and this debt, which nobody believes it possible ever to pay off.” (Loud applause.)

The tongue of detraction was still busy charging Mr. Cobden with being oblivious to the dangers of invasion; accusing him of want of patriotism; and alleging that his labours had too wide a sweep and would benefit other nations to the detriment of his own. In fact, his reputation had long been considered as a sort of open unbarriered area, in which every sciolist of politics and every raw pretender to patriotism had a

right to exercise his studied commonplaces, and these personages had imitators downwards, for everything depended upon high example. These detractors would have preferred a display of arrogance or contempt towards the French nation, instead of neighbourly feeling. Richard Cobden had a truer idea of patriotism than this, and while no Greek emigrant, carrying with him the sacred fire kindled on the hearth of home and the patch of soil carefully dug from the place of his birth, could love Greece more than this son of a Sussex farmer loved England, it was his ambition and study to understand other nations, to sympathise with them, and to make them participants in the blessings of peace and good-will which he strove to secure for his own native land. He was "the representative of the sentiments and those cosmopolitan principles before which national frontiers and rivalries disappear—a man essentially of his country, but still more a man of his time." His sole aim was to guard against the calamity of war; to prevent needless and nonsensical expenditure in armaments; to plant deep in the tenacious ground of commercial sympathy a rock for the foot of peace; to promote frugality, and induce his countrymen to reflect and form their own judgments; for he knew that there are historical falsehoods which are continually kept alive by evil feelings and intentions which originally produced them. Generation after generation they are repeated with a pertinacity which no disappointment relaxes, and with an effrontery which nothing can abash, and which, therefore, is only hardened and exasperated by the infamy of repeated exposures; and thus the work of delusion and mischief, for which they were designed, is carried on through successive centuries and ages. Such is to take things for granted, to assent to received notions without examining them, to follow credulity instead of reason, and to be the incorrigible slave of usage. This stays the ripening of many a useful measure, protracting its operation to a distant date; hinders the true policy of a nation from being followed up; and prevents legislation from keeping pace with the circumstances of the age. It is from the injurious prevalence of this folly that in our Senate we hear arguments maintained that are open to refutation by the humblest capacity that will give itself the trouble to analyse them.

There is nothing of which society is less tolerant than merit. The aristocracy of rank is cheerfully acknowledged, because it is an ancient and "time-honoured" convention; the aristocracy of wealth is allowed, because rich men, even unknowingly, and unwittingly, benefit those who come within the

sphere of their activity; but for personal endowments there is no mercy. The supremacy of merit is extorted from the crowd; and the aristocracy, compelled to acknowledge the vast distance between itself and the man of genius, is perpetually on the search after some humiliating weakness or disparity, which may compensate for this provoking excellence and drag back the eminent to something like equality. The most ordinary person could twit Cobden in later years with unsuccessful private speculations, and accuse Bright with want of foresight in opposing the Ten Hours Bill; while the forethought, the industry, and the intellectual strength of these two men, are matters for the comprehension of their equals alone. Both of them were remarkable for their reverence for common sense; and to this all their maxims of government appealed. Their wisdom was the wisdom of Socrates, practical rather than speculative, homely rather than sublime; they acted upon the principle that experience was the best guide, and exposed the folly of acting upon mere conjecture.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICA.

The Attitude of the English Government—Mr. Bright's Advice to his Countrymen—Check to the Exportation of Cotton—Distress in Lancashire—Review of the Past History of America—The Cotton Supply—Mr. Cobden with his Constituents—The Revolt in America Explained—Sympathy for America in Lancashire—Working Men's Homes—Meeting of the Union and Emancipation Society—The Southern Confederacy.

IN the early part of 1861 civil war broke out in the United States of America, and at first it seemed likely to terminate in the formation of two separate Republics : one comprised of the free states of the North and the other of the slave states of the South. The quarrel arose through there being a disposition in the North to abolish slavery throughout the Union ; and the election of Abraham Lincoln, who was the first anti-slavery President, brought matters to a climax, and South Carolina took the first step towards secession. This movement was the ground of a long and cruel war. A million of men, who twelve months before were peaceful citizens of the same country, were now encamped under arms, and scheming to accomplish each other's destruction ; but of the North it may be said that their cause was just, for they were determined to erase from their national annals the stain of maintaining slavery.

There was no puzzle as to which side Mr. Bright would ally himself with. He was not the man to countenance slavery in any form, for he, like the Sect to which he belongs, has always been the indefatigable friend of humanity, and stood forth firmly in favour of the abolition of slavery, even when they stood alone to break the strong rivets of the chain custom had wrought and fashioned on a people whose only fault was that they were "guilty of a skin not coloured like their own." It was certain that Bright would follow in the footsteps of Clarkson, Wilberforce, Joseph Sturge, William Allen, William Foster, Joseph John Gurney, and Joseph Gurney Bevan, who merited the praise of consistency in one of the noblest causes of humanity, and whose names will descend to posterity with honour.

The Quaker poet, Whittier, for years animated a small band of abolitionists with his vigorous poems against slavery. The originator of the underground railway across the State of Ohio to the British possessions, by which many thousands of slaves

gained their freedom, was named Levi Coffin, and he too was a Quaker. In fact, the Society of Friends, for nearly a century before Parliament abolished slavery in the English colonies, entered its condemnation upon their minutes.

Lord John Russell announced in the House of Commons on the 8th of May, that, after consulting the law officers of the Crown, the Government were of opinion that the South Confederacy of America, according to the principles which appeared to be just, must be recognised as a belligerent power. On the 13th appeared a proclamation of neutrality. Mr. Bright first spoke publicly on the subject at a meeting of his townsmen at Rochdale, on the 1st of August:—

“I advise you,” said Mr. Bright, “and I advise the people of England, to abstain from applying to the United States doctrines and principles which we never apply to our own case. At any rate, they (the Americans) have never fought ‘for the balance of power’ in Europe. They have never fought to keep up a decaying Empire. They have never squandered the money of their people in such a phantom expedition as we have been engaged in. And now, at this moment, when you are told that they are going to be ruined by their vast expenditure—why, the sum that they are going to raise in the great emergency of this grievous war is not greater than what we raise every year during a time of peace. (Loud cheers.) They say they are not going to liberate slaves. No; the object of the Washington Government is to maintain their own constitution and to act legally, as it permits and requires. No man is more in favour of peace than I am; no man has denounced war more than I have, probably, in this country; few men in their public life have suffered more obloquy—I had almost said, more indignity—in consequence of it. But I cannot for the life of me see upon any of those principles upon which States are governed now—I say nothing of the literal word of the New Testament—I cannot see how the state of affairs in America, with regard to the United States Government, could have been different from what it is at this moment. We had a heptarchy in this country, and it was thought to be a good thing to get rid of it, and have a united nation. If the thirty-three or thirty-four States of the American Union can break off whenever they like, I can see nothing but disaster and confusion throughout the whole of that continent. I say that the war, be it successful or not, be it Christian or not, be it wise or not, is a war to sustain the Government and to sustain the authority of a great nation; and that the people of England, if they are true to their own sympathies, to their own history, and to their own great act of 1834, to which reference has already been made, will have no sympathy with those who wish to build up a great Empire on the perpetual bondage of millions of their fellow men.” (Loud cheers.)

One of the serious results of this unfortunate war was the check it gave to the export of cotton to this country, and trade in Lancashire assumed a gloomy aspect. Mill after mill was compelled to adopt short time, which eventually resulted in an entire cessation of production. The winter approached earlier than usual, and the prospect was most discouraging. The workpeople of Rochdale, although extensively employed in the woollen manufacture, suffered more than the inhabitants of Bolton, who were almost entirely engaged in cotton, owing to the fact that Rochdale was more dependent upon American cotton than the manufacturers of Bolton, who spin fine yarn.

Soup kitchens were early established in the town, and a committee to take the superintendence and to make a house-to-house visitation of the poor; and by this means sufferers of a retiring or independent disposition were sought out and relieved.

“True charity makes others’ wants her own.”

Now that the workpeople had much leisure time on their hands Messrs. Bright Brothers opened a large room in their mills as a schoolroom for adults, who made satisfactory progress in reading, writing, arithmetic, and in other branches of education. Newspapers, periodicals, and books were supplied, and thus the workpeople were enabled to spend the time to advantage.

As it was found by the Boards of Guardians of Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Cheshire that the Minor Relief Aid Act did not afford them sufficient facilities for borrowing monies with which to employ distressed persons on public works, and as they were of opinion that the Government ought to lend the requisite funds, under proper regulations, and security of the rates, at three and a-half per cent. interest, repayable within a period not exceeding twenty years, a deputation of members of Boards of Guardians waited upon the Right Hon. C. P. Villiers, the President of the Poor Law Board. Mr. Bright spoke on behalf of the deputation. Mr. Villiers said the cause had been very favourably presented, and he would give the matter his serious consideration, and would present it to the other members of the Cabinet. Ultimately the Government agreed to find a sum of £200,000 to meet the emergency. This proved of great service, and the distressed were employed in improving and repairing roads and other public works.

A rupture between the United States and England was nearly brought about in consequence of the seizure of the envoys, Messrs. Mason and Slidell, on board the *Trent*, a British steam-packet; but the concessions demanded by England were conceded by the Washington Government.

A banquet was given to Mr. Bright by his fellow-townsmen on the 4th of December, 1861, in recognition of his labours and valuable services on all occasions. It was wished once more to receive from him counsel and guidance, and especially on this occasion, concerning the critical position of affairs prevailing with respect to the American civil war. The banquet was held in the Public Hall. Mr. J. T. Pagan, the Mayor, presided.

“I am, as you all know,” said Mr. Bright, “surrounded at this moment by my neighbours and friends, and I may say, with the utmost truth, that I value the good opinions of those who now hear my voice far beyond the opinions of any equal

number of the inhabitants of this country selected from any other portion of it. You have, by this act of kindness that you have shown me, given proof that, in the main, you do not disapprove of my course and labours, that at least you are willing to express an opinion that the motives by which I have been actuated have been honest and honourable to myself, and that that course has not been entirely without service to my country. (Cheers.) . . . Seven years ago our eyes were turned with anxious expectation to a remote corner of Europe, where five nations were contending in bloody strife for an object which possibly hardly one of them comprehended, and, if they did comprehend it, which all sensible men amongst them must have known to be absolutely impracticable. Four years ago we were looking still further to the East, where there was a gigantic revolt in a great dependency of the British Crown, arising mainly from gross neglect, and from the incapacity of England, up to that moment, to govern the country which it had known how to conquer. Two years ago we looked South, to the plains of Lombardy, and saw a great strife there, in which every man in England took a strong interest; and we have welcomed, as the result of that strife, the addition of a great kingdom to the list of European States. Now, our eyes are turned in a contrary direction, and we look to the West. There we see a struggle in progress of the very highest interest to England and to humanity at large. We see there a nation which I shall call the Transatlantic English nation—the inheritor and partaker of all the historic glories of this country. We see it torn with intestine broils, and suffering from calamities from which, for more than a century past—in fact, for more than two centuries past—this country has been exempt. That struggle is of especial interest to us. We remember the description which one of our great poets gives of Rome,—

‘Lone mother of dead empires.’

But England is the living mother of great nations on the American and on the Australian continents, which promise to endow the world with all her knowledge and all her civilisation, and with even something more than the freedom she herself enjoys. (Cheers.) Eighty-five years ago, at the time when some of our oldest townsmen were very little children, there were, on the North American continent, colonies, mainly of Englishmen, containing about three millions of souls. These colonies we have seen a year ago constituting the United States of North America, and comprising a population of no less than thirty millions of souls. (Cheers.) . . . If I were to speak of that country in a religious aspect, I should say that, considering the short space of time to which their history goes back, there is nothing on the face of the earth besides, and never has been, to equal the magnificent arrangement of churches and ministers, and of all the appliances which are thought necessary for a nation to teach Christianity and morality to its people. (Cheers.) Besides all this, when I state that for many years past the annual public expenditure of the Government of that country has been somewhere between £10,000,000 and £15,000,000, I need not perhaps say further, that there has always existed amongst all the population an amount of comfort and prosperity and abounding plenty such as I believe no other country in the world, in any age, has enjoyed. (Cheers.) This is a very fine, but a very true, picture; yet it has another side to which I must advert. There has been one great feature in that country, one great contrast, which has been pointed to by all who have commented upon the United States as a feature of danger, as a contrast calculated to give pain. There has been in that country the utmost liberty to the white man, and bondage and degradation to the black man. Now rely upon it, that wherever Christianity lives and flourishes, there must grow up from it, necessarily, a conscience hostile to any oppression and to any wrong; and therefore, from the hour when the United States’ Constitution was formed, so long as it left there this great evil—then comparatively small, but now so great—it left there seeds of that which an American statesman has so happily described, of that ‘irrepressible conflict’ of which now the whole world is the witness. It has been a common thing for men disposed to carp at the United States to point to this blot upon their fair fame, and to compare it with the boasted declaration of freedom in their Deed and Declaration of Independence. But we must recollect who sowed this seed of trouble, and how and by whom it has been cherished. (Cheers.) At this very moment, then, there are millions in the United States who personally, or whose immediate parents, have at one time been citizens of this country. They have found a home in the Far West: they subdued the wilderness; they met with plenty there which was not afforded them in their native country; and they have become a great people. There may be persons in England who are jealous of those States. There may be men who

dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South. But of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross, or calumny the most wicked, can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic. (Cheers.) Now, whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonoured independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions, or even fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said amongst them, that, in the darkest hour of their country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; but if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Bright again spoke on the subject at a banquet of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce on the 4th February, 1862, presided over by Mr. George Dixon, the vice-president:—

"At this moment the peril which has been so often foreshadowed has come upon us, and we are falling upon the evil days which some men foretold. Nobody knew when they would come, or in what shape, and unfortunately very few took any steps whatever to prepare for those difficulties when they should come. I speak on this subject with more knowledge than many, because, ever since I was in the House of Commons almost, I have paid more than common attention to this question, and particularly with regard to the probability of our obtaining supplies of cotton from India. (Hear, hear.) In the year 1847 I moved for a select committee to inquire into the obstacles to the growth of cotton in India. That committee was appointed in the session of 1848, and sat during that session examining a great number of witnesses, procured a great amount of what I believe to be conclusive and valuable evidence, and they agreed to a report which, though not up to that time what the evidence justified, was still a valuable report. In 1850, as nothing had been done in consequence of that evidence and that report—for nothing is done in this country as long as no great catastrophe happens (laughter and cheers)—I moved, not for another committee to take evidence, but for the appointment of a royal commission, to go to India, to report upon the obstacles which interfered with the growth of cotton, particularly in the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras. But the President of the Board of Control opposed that motion of mine. He repudiated it. My fears, he said, were not justified. He gave me a lot of statistics respecting cotton, about which he knew nothing in the world. (Laughter.) The royal commission was not issued. Therefore it did not proceed to India, and therefore many of the facts which I have stated repeatedly, both in and out of Parliament, remained without that confirmation which they would have received had that commission made its investigation in India. On these occasions I did not leave it to be doubted what I apprehended would come to Lancashire some day from this cause. I pointed it out clearly on the 6th of May, 1847, and on the 18th of June, 1850. It was no long-sightedness to say or to see what would result, for I took it for granted every man must have known, that in a country, the constitution of which declared as its cardinal point that all men are equal, the institution of slavery by some means or other must at some period come to an end, and that the organisation of labour in the Southern States of America must at least for a time be interfered with, if not wholly broken up. . . . If there had been in every district of India a really effective government, that could have given a fair chance to the industry of the most docile people in the world, and to the climate, and the soil (the most favourable to everything we need), I have not the smallest doubt that at this moment we might have had whatever supply of cotton was necessary for the manufacturers of this country, even were the cessation of the supply from the United States more total and continued than we hope it will be." (Cheers.)

On the 9th May, 1862, in common with other members who addressed the House of Commons, Mr. Bright highly eulogised the patience, dignity, and virtue which had been exhibited by the operatives during the distress, and expressed a hope that these circumstances would not be forgotten when the same class should again become candidates for political power. He informed the House that in the town where he lived—

“There has been a committee which has been working with considerable success—a committee for canvassing every street, and every house where there may be anybody likely to require relief, and for obtaining the most accurate information with respect to their resources; and they have made a rule that wherever the income of every family has fallen short of a certain sum per head they will afford the relief that may be required. . . . Depend upon it that, in the ‘short and simple annals of the poor,’ there is to be found heroism not less than that for which votes of this House are given. (Hear, hear.) And I trust that hereafter when we come to look back on the abundant compliments which hon. members now pay to this population, there may be some who will change their opinion of them and think they are not improper subjects of admission to political power.” (Cheers.)

If there was then a disposition on the part of those hon. members whom Mr. Bright addressed to grant the boon of the franchise, it reminds one that

“The road was long from the intention to the completion.”

Mr. Cobden addressed his constituents on the 22nd of October in the large machine works of Alderman Tatham, Milnrow Road. Mr. Bright was not able to be present through business in London.

“The question we have to ask ourselves is this,” said Mr. Cobden, referring to the civil war in America, “What is the position which, as a nation, we ought to take with reference to the Americans in this dispute? That is the question which concerns us. It is no use our arguing as to what is the origin of the war, or any use whatever to advise these disputants. From the moment the first shot is fired or the first blow is struck in a dispute, then farewell to all reason and argument; you might as well attempt to reason with mad dogs as with men when they have begun to spill each others’ blood in mortal combat. I was so convinced of that fact during the Crimean war, which you know I opposed—I was so convinced of the utter uselessness of raising one’s voice in opposition to war when it has once begun—that I made up my mind that as long as I was in political life, should a war again break out between England and a great Power, I would never open my mouth upon the subject from the time the first gun was fired until the peace was made, because, when a war has once commenced, it will only be by the exhaustion of one party that a termination will be arrived at. If you look back at our history, what did eloquence, in the persons of Chatham and Burke, do to prevent a war with our first American colonies? What did eloquence, in the persons of Fox and his friends, do to prevent the French revolution, or bring it to a close? And there was a man who, at the commencement of the Crimean war, in terms of eloquence, in power and pathos and argument equal—I believe fitting to compare with anything that fell from the lips of Chatham or Burke—I mean your distinguished townsman, my friend, Mr. Bright—(loud cheers)—and what was his success? Why, they burnt him in effigy for his pains. (Hear, hear.) Well, if we are here powerless as politicians to check a war at home, how useless and unavailing must it be for me to presume to affect in the slightest degree the results of the contest in America.”

For some time before this date Mr. Cobden’s health was in a delicate state, and he had taken a tour in Scotland for the pur-

pose of recruiting himself. Finding that he was a little better, he consented to address his constituents, but it was evident that he had not thoroughly recovered.

Mr. Bright, in a speech at Birmingham on the 18th of December, 1862, again spoke on the civil war in America.

"I said—and my hon. friend has admitted this—that when the revolt or secession was first announced, people here were generally against the South," said Mr. Bright. "Nobody thought then that the South had any cause for breaking up the integrity of that good nation. Their opinion was, and what people said, according to their different politics in this country was, 'They have a Government which is mild, and not in any degree oppressive; they have not what some people love very much, and what some people dislike—they have not a costly monarchy, and an aristocracy, creating and living on patronage. They have not an expensive foreign policy; a great army; a great navy; and they have no suffering millions discontented and endeavouring to overthrow their Government—all which things have been said against Governments in this country and in Europe a hundred times within our own hearing—and therefore, they said, 'Why should these men revolt?'"

"But for a moment the Washington Government appeared paralysed. It had no army and no navy; everybody was traitor to it. It was paralysed and apparently helpless; and in the hour when the government was transferred from President Buchanan to President Lincoln, many people—such was the unprepared state of the North, such was the apparent paralysis of everything there—thought there would be no war; and men shook hands with each other pleasantly, and congratulated themselves that the disaster of a great strife, and the mischief to our own trade, might be avoided. That was the opinion at that moment, so far as I can recollect and could gather at the time, with my opportunities of gathering such opinion. They thought the North would acquiesce in the rending of the Republic, and that there would be no war.

"Well, but there was another reason. They were told by certain public writers in this country that the contest was entirely hopeless, as they have been told lately by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am very happy that, though the Chancellor of the Exchequer is able to decide to a penny what shall be the amount of taxes to meet public expenditure in England, he cannot decide what shall be the fate of a whole continent. It was said that the contest was hopeless, and why should the North continue a contest at so much loss of blood and treasure, and at so great a loss to the commerce of the whole world? If a man thought—if a man believed in his heart that the contest was absolutely hopeless—no man in this country had probably any right to form a positive opinion one way or the other—but if he had formed that opinion, he might think, 'Well, the North can never be successful; it would be much better that they should not carry on the war at all; and therefore I am rather glad that the South should have success, for by that the war will be the sooner put an end to.' I think this was the feeling that was abroad. . . . But, Sir, the Free States are the home of the working man. Now, I speak to working men particularly at this moment. Do you know that in fifteen years two million five hundred thousand persons, men, women and children, have left the United Kingdom to find a home in the Free States of America? That is a population equal to eight great cities of the size of Birmingham. What would you think of eight Birminghams being transplanted from this country and set down in the United States? Speaking generally, every man of these two and a-half millions is in a position of much higher comfort and prosperity than he would have been if he had remained in this country. I say, it is the home of the working man; as one of her poets has recently said—

'For her free latch-string never was drawn in
Against the poorest child of Adam's kin.'

And in that land there are no six millions of grown men—I speak of the Free States—excluded from the constitution of their country and its electoral franchise; there you will find a free church, a free school, free land, a free vote, and a free career for the child of the humblest born in the land. My countrymen, who work for your living, remember this: there will be one wild shriek of freedom to startle all mankind if that American Republic should be overthrown.

"Now for one moment let us lift ourselves, if we can, above the narrow circle in which we are all too apt to live and think; let us put ourselves on an historical eminence, and judge this matter fairly. Slavery has been, as we all know, the huge foul blot upon the fame of the American Republic; it is a hideous outrage against human right and against Divine law; but the pride, the passion of man, will not permit its peaceable extinction. The slave-owners of our colonies, if they had been strong enough, would have revolted too. I believe there was no mode short of a miracle more stupendous than any recorded in Holy Writ that could in our time, or in a century, or in any time, have brought about the abolition of slavery in America, but the suicide which the South has committed and the war which it has begun.

"I blame men who are eager to admit into the family of nations a State which offers itself to us, based upon a principle, I will undertake to say, more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilised, or in savage times. The leader of this revolt proposes this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England the blight and curse of slavery shall be for ever perpetuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. I cannot believe that civilisation, in its journey with the sun, will sink into endless night in order to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt, who seek to

‘Wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.’

I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all that wide continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime."

Mr. Bright was present at the second anniversary dinner of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, which was held on the 15th of January, 1863.

"I see from the East unto the West," said Mr. Bright, "from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, in spite of what misled, prejudiced, unjust, and wicked men may do, the cause of freedom still moving onward; and it is not in human power to arrest its progress. There is much to be done in our own country, but if men examine questions fairly, and decide upon them truthfully, shunning party spirit, we may have hope that we shall do much to elevate our people, to improve our institutions, to make broader and safer the foundations of our freedom, and to build up and preserve a commonwealth which should do much to help forward the advancement of the world."

A town's meeting was held in Rochdale, on the 3rd of February, which had been called by the Mayor, Mr. G. L. Ashworth, in compliance with a numerously-signed requisition, for the purpose of passing resolutions of thanks to the merchants and citizens of New York for their sympathy with the sufferings of the unemployed workpeople of Lancashire, and for their munificent contributions to the funds for its relief. The Public Hall, in which the meeting was held, was crowded. Mr. Bright, in the course of his speech, remarked:—

"I regard this transmission of assistance from the United States as a proof that the world moves onward in the direction of a better time. (Hear, hear.) It is an evidence that, whatever may be the faults of ambitious men, and sometimes, may I not say, the crimes of Governments, the peoples are drawing together and beginning to learn that it never was intended that they should be hostile to each other, but that every nation should take a brotherly interest in every other nation in the world.

(Cheers.) There has been, as we all know, not a little jealousy between some portions of the people in this country and some portions of the people of the United States. Perhaps the jealousy has existed more on this side. I think it has found more expression here, probably through the means of the public press, than has been the case with them. I am not alluding now to the last two years, but as long as most of us have been readers of newspapers and observers of what has passed around us. . . . If we are the friends of freedom, personal and political—and we all profess to be so, and most of us, more or less, are striving after it more completely for our country—how can we withhold our sympathy from a Government and a people amongst whom white men have always been free, and who are now offering an equal freedom to the black? I advise you not to believe in the ‘destruction’ of the American nation. If facts should happen, by any chance, to force you to believe it, do not commit the crime of wishing it. (Cheers.) I do not blame men who draw different conclusions from mine from the facts, and who believe that the restoration of the Union is impossible. As the facts lie before our senses, so must we form a judgment on them. But I blame those men that wish for such a catastrophe. For myself I have never despaired and will not despair. In the language of one of our old poets, who wrote, I think, more than 300 years ago, I will not despair—

‘For I have seen a ship in haven fall,
After the storm had broke both mast and shroud.’

From the very outburst of this great convulsion, I have had but one hope and one faith, and it is this—that the result of this stupendous strife may be to make freedom the heritage for ever of a whole continent, and that the grandeur and the prosperity of the American Union may never be impaired.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright delivered a speech at a meeting in St. James’s Hall, London, on the 26th of March, which had been called by the Trades’ Unions, to express their sentiments on the American war :—

“Privilege thinks it has a great interest in it,” said Mr. Bright, “and every morning, with blatant voice, it comes into your streets and curses the American Republic. Privilege has beheld an afflicting spectacle for many years past. It has beheld thirty millions of men, happy and prosperous, without emperor, without king, without the surroundings of a court, without nobles, except such as are made by eminence in intellect and virtue, without State bishops and State priests—

‘Sole vendors of the lore which works salvation,’

without great armies and great navies, without great debts and without great taxes. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Privilege has shuddered at what might happen to old Europe if this grand experiment should succeed. But you, the workers—you, striving after a better time—you, struggling upwards towards the light, with slow and painful steps—you have no cause to look with jealousy upon a country which, amongst all the great nations of the globe, is that where labour has met with the highest honour, and where it has reaped its greatest reward. Are you aware of the fact that in fifteen years, which is but as yesterday when it is past, two and a-half millions of your countrymen have found a home in the United States—that a population equal nearly, if not quite, to the population of this great city—itsself equal to no mean kingdom—has emigrated from these shores? In the United States there has been, as you know, an open door for every man—and millions have entered into it and have found rest. (Cheers.) You wish the freedom of your country. You wish it for yourselves. You strive for it in many ways. Do not then give the hand of fellowship to the worst foes of freedom that the world has ever seen, and do not, I beseech you, bring down a curse upon your cause which no after-penitence can ever lift from it. You will not do this. I have faith in you. Impartial history will tell that, when your statesmen were hostile or coldly neutral, when many of your rich men were corrupt, when your press—which ought to have instructed and defended—was mainly written to betray, the fate of a continent and of its vast population being in peril, you clung to freedom with an unfaltering trust that God in His infinite mercy will yet make it the heritage of all His children.” (Cheers.)

A public meeting was convened by the Union and Emanci-

pation Society in the London Tavern on the 16th of June, which was presided over by Mr. Bright, and he spoke on the war in America and the supply of cotton.

"Now I am going to transport you, in mind, to Lancashire," said Mr. Bright, "and the interests of Lancashire, which, after all, are the interests of the whole United Kingdom, and clearly of not a few in the metropolis. What was the condition of our greatest manufacturing industry before the war, and before secession had been practically attempted? It was this: that almost ninety per cent. of all our cotton came from the Southern States of the American Union, and was, at least nine-tenths of it, the produce of the uncompensated labour of the negro.

"Everybody knew that we were carrying on a prodigious industry upon a most insecure foundation; and it was the commonest thing in the world for men who were discussing the present and the future of the cotton trade, whether in Parliament or out of it, to point to the existence of slavery in the United States of America as the one dangerous thing in connection with that great trade; and it was one of the reasons which stimulated me on several occasions to urge upon the Government of this country to improve the Government of India, and to give us a chance of receiving a considerable portion of our supply from India, so that we might not be left in absolute want when the calamity occurred, which all thoughtful men knew must some day come, in the United States.

"Now, I maintain that with a supply of cotton mainly derived from the Southern States, and raised by slave labour, two things are indisputable: first, that the supply must always be insufficient; and second, that it must always be insecure. Perhaps many of you are not aware that in the United States—I am speaking of the Slave States, and the cotton-growing States—the quantity of land which is cultivated for cotton is a mere garden, a mere plot, in comparison with the whole of the cotton region. I speak from the authority of a report lately presented to the Boston Chamber of Commerce, containing much important information on this question; and I believe that the whole acreage, or the whole breadth of the land on which cotton is grown in America, does not exceed ten thousand square miles—that is, a space one hundred miles long and one hundred miles broad, or the size of two of our largest counties in England; but the land of the ten chief cotton-producing States is sixty times as much as that, being, I believe, about twelve times the size of England and Wales. . . . You do not suppose that those beautiful States, those regions than which earth offers nothing to man more fertile and more lovely, are shunned by the enterprising population of the North because they like the rigours of a Northern winter and the greater changeableness of the Northern seasons? Once abolish slavery in the South, and the whole of the country will be open to the enterprise and to the industry of all. And, more than that, when you find that only the other day not fewer than four thousand emigrants, most of them from the United Kingdom, landed in one day in the city of New York, do you suppose that all those men would go north and west at once? Would not some of them turn their faces southwards, and seek the clime of the sun, which is so grateful to all men; where they would find a soil more fertile, rivers more abundant, and everything that Nature offers more profusely given, but from which they are now shut out by the accursed power which slavery exerts? With freedom you would have a gradual filling up of the wildernesses of the Southern States; you would have there, not population only, but capital, and industry, and roads, and schools, and everything which tends to produce growth, wealth, and prosperity.

"I maintain—and I believe my opinion will be supported by all those men who are most conversant with American affairs—that, with slavery abolished, with freedom firmly established in the South, you would find in ten years to come a rapid increase in the growth of cotton; and not only would its growth be rapid, but its permanent increase would be secured.

"I said I was interested in this great question of cotton. I come from the midst of the great cotton industry of Lancashire; much the largest portion of anything I have in the world depends upon it; not a little of it is now utterly valueless during the continuance of this war. My neighbours, by thousands and scores of thousands, are suffering, more or less, as I am suffering; and many of them, as you know—more than a quarter of a million of them—have been driven from a subsistence gained by their honourable labour to the extremest poverty, and to a dependence upon the charity of their fellow-countrymen. My interest is the interest of all the population.

"My interest is against a mere enthusiasm, a mere sentiment, a mere visionary fancy of freedom as against slavery. I am speaking now as a matter of business. I am glad when matters of business go straight with matters of high sentiment and morality, and from this platform I declare my solemn conviction that there is no greater enemy to Lancashire, to its capital and to its labour, than the man who wishes the cotton agriculture of the Southern States to be continued under the conditions of slave labour."

Mr. Roebuck introduced a motion into the House of Commons, on the 30th of June, in recognition of the Southern Confederacy, and Mr. Bright delivered a most eloquent speech. He said :—

"I want to know whether you feel as I feel upon this question. When I can get down to my home from this House, I find half a dozen little children playing upon my hearth. (Cheers.) How many members are there who can say with me, that the most innocent, the most pure, the most holy joy, which in their past years they have felt, or in their future years they hope for, has not arisen from contact and association with our precious children? (Loud cheers.) Well, then, if that be so—if, when the hand of death takes one of those flowers from our dwelling, our heart is overwhelmed with sorrow and our household is covered with gloom, what would it be if our children were brought up to this infernal system—one hundred and fifty thousand of them every year brought into the world in these Slave States, amongst these 'gentlemen,' amongst this 'chivalry,' amongst these men that we can make our friends? Do you forget the thousandfold griefs and the countless agonies which belonged to the silent conflict of slavery before the war began? (Hear, hear.) It is all very well for the honourable and learned gentleman to tell me, to tell this House—he will not tell the country with any satisfaction to it—that slavery, after all, is not so bad a thing. The brother of my honourable friend the member for South Durham told me that in North Carolina he himself saw a woman whose every child, ten in number, had been sold when they grew up to the age at which they would fetch a price to their master. (Cheers.) . . . We know the cause of this revolt, its purposes and its aims. (Hear, hear.) Those who made it have not left us in darkness respecting their intentions, but what they are to accomplish is still hidden from our sight; and I will abstain now, as I have always abstained with regard to it, from predicting what is to come. I know what I hope for, and what I shall rejoice in, but I know nothing of future facts that will enable me to express a confident opinion. (Hear, hear.) Whether it will give freedom to the race which white men have trampled in the dust, and whether the issue will purify a nation steeped in crimes committed against that race, is known only to the Supreme. (Hear, hear.) In His hands are alike the breath of man and the life of States. I am willing to commit to Him the issue of this dreadful contest; but I implore of Him, and I beseech this House, that my country may lift not hand or voice in aid of the most stupendous act of guilt that history has recorded in the annals of mankind." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Roebuck's speech received well-merited rebuke from all parts of the House, and particularly from Mr. Bright, whose scathing satire doubtless contributed to make him withdraw his motion.

The members of the New York Chamber of Commerce forwarded to Mr. Bright, through the American Minister in London, a resolution which had been unanimously passed at one of their meetings, and was to the effect—

"That this Chamber desires to place on its records an expression of grateful sense entertained by its members of the intelligent, eloquent, just, and fearless manner in which Mr. John Bright has defended, before the people of England in the British Parliament, the principles of constitutional liberty and international

justice for the maintenance of which the American people are contending, and that the proceedings be communicated to Mr. Bright."

Mr. Bright acknowledged the compliment.

Mr. Page, a wealthy merchant from New York, and an enthusiastic friend of Sunday Schools, while addressing the scholars of Gravel Lane Ragged School, Salford, made the following interesting statement. He said:—

"If you were to ask in the schools of America, 'Who are the three men, whom as a country, we love the most?' they would reply: First, Washington, because he was the father of his country; second, Abraham Lincoln, because he was the saviour of his country; third—and this with cheers—John Bright, because he is the friend of the working men."

President Lincoln's gold-headed staff, which his family bequeathed to the Rev. Dr. J. Smith, U.S. Consul at Dundee, was presented to Mr. Bright in the following terms:—"Bequeathed by the Rev. Dr. Smith, U.S. Consul, Dundee, to the Rt. Hon. John Bright, M.P., in recognition of his tried friendship to the United States."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. COBDEN'S CLOSING DAYS.

Messrs. Bright and Cobden at a Public Meeting in Rochdale—Bright's Address to his Constituents in January, 1864—Capital Punishment—The Atlantic Telegraph—The Permissive Bill—Mr. Cobden's last Address at Rochdale—Opening of the Birmingham New Exchange—Mr. Bright Addresses his Constituents—Mr. Cobden again refuses to take Office—Defence of Canada—Mr. Cobden's Journey to London—His Illness and Death—Scene in the House—Reminiscences of the departed Statesman—The Funeral.

MR. BRIGHT accompanied Mr. Cobden, on the 24th of November, 1863, to a meeting of his constituents in the spacious machine works of Mr. John Robinson, in Fishwick Street, which accommodated about 4,000 persons. The Mayor, Mr. S. Stott, presided. The member for Rochdale delivered a splendid speech, in which he touched on most of the important topics of the day. He seemed to have a foreboding that his life was drawing near to a close, for in referring to the question of Reform he said sorrowfully, "But I am not sure that I shall live to be able to afford you much help in the matter." This remark threw a transient gloom over the sea of human faces assembled before him, and the expressions that played over them seemed as if to say,

"O grant that day may claim our sorrows late."

Mr. Bright, in his speech, confined himself exclusively to domestic reforms.

"Now, since 1830," observed Mr. Bright, "the wheel has been entirely turned round, and the Whigs have been for the most part at the bottom. Now, the Whigs when they are in office are not precisely the same kind of people that they are when they are out of office. (Laughter.) Their contentment is something wonderful. They believe that the constitution has then attained its highest excellence. I recollect one of their own writers describes them, and uses some lines which I once quoted a good many years ago, but did not quote against the Whigs then, but was obliged to make a little change to make them apply to somebody else. (Laughter.) But he was speaking of this contentment of the Whigs when they got into office, and he said—

'As bees on flowers alighting cease their hum,
So, settling into places, Whigs are dumb.'

(Laughter.) Look at the power which the United States have developed. They have maintained now for nearly three years the most gigantic struggle ever undertaken by any nation; they have brought more men into the field, built more ships for their navy, they have shown greater resources than, I will undertake to say, any nation in Europe is at this moment capable of. Look at the order which has prevailed. Their elections, at which as you see by the papers 50,000 or 100,000

or a quarter of a million persons vote in a given State, are conducted with less disorder than you have seen lately in three of the smallest boroughs in England—Barnstaple, Windsor, and Andover. (Laughter and cheers.) Look at their industry. Notwithstanding this terrific struggle, their agriculture, their manufactures, and commerce proceed with an uninterrupted sweep, and they are ruled by a President, not chosen it is true from some worn-out royal or noble blood, but from the people, and whose truthfulness and spotless honour have gained him universal praise. (Enthusiastic cheers.) And now, Sir, this country, that has been thus vilified through half the organs of the press in England during the last three years, and has been pointed at, too, as an example to be shunned by many of your statesmen—this country, now in mortal strife, affords a haven and a home for multitudes flying from the burdens and neglect of the old Governments of Europe. (Cheers.) And when this mortal strife is over, when peace is restored, when slavery is destroyed, when the Union is cemented afresh—for I would say in the language of one of her own poets, addressing his country—

‘The grave’s not dug where traitor hands shall lay
In fearful haste thy murdered corpse away.’

—(enthusiastic cheers)—then Europe and England may learn that an instructed democracy is the surest foundation of government, and that education and freedom are the only sources of true greatness and true happiness among any people. (Enthusiastic, general, and prolonged cheering.)

This speech of Mr. Bright’s extended over three columns and a-half of the newspapers, and it was considered one of the finest and most perfect as a work of art. It sparkled with sarcasms, was clear and fiery, its sentences were terse and energetic, and its picturesque phrases and poetic imagery brilliant.

In their speeches both Bright and Cobden referred to the land question. The *Times*, in commenting on their utterances in a leading article, accused them of inciting discontent amongst the poor, and proposing a spoliation of the owners of land. Mr. Cobden, without consulting Mr. Bright, at once in a letter charged the editor of the *Times* with committing a gross literary outrage, and it led to a lengthy controversy between Mr. Cobden and Mr. John T. Delane, who had put a wrong construction on the passages, and who afterwards disavowed the imputation.

Mr. Bright addressed his constituents in the Birmingham Town Hall, on the 26th of January 1864, under the presidency of the Mayor. He spoke for an hour and a half, and in one part of his speech he said:—

“What I propose is this—it is nothing that I have not stated before—it is the most moderate thing that can be proposed. If you want to see an admirable description of what I think it would be wise to do, you will find it in a paper which certainly is not very Radical—is rather, in my opinion, though conducted with considerable ability, concealed in some of its criticisms upon us—I mean the *Spectator*. There was an article on Saturday last in this paper on the subject of land laws in New York, and although there are only three or four lines about New York in the article, that does not matter, for it is admirably written. In one place it reads as follows:—‘No doubt Mr. Bright would consider this not sufficient change for the purposes he wishes.’ He is quite mistaken. The changes which he proposes are more extensive than any changes I have ever proposed, either in public or in private. What are these changes? First of all, that the law shall declare that when any person owning property dies without making a distribution of it by will, the law shall distribute it upon the same principle that it now adopts when it divides—I am now

speaking of landed property—any other kind of property. For example: Suppose a man has got money in the bank—I wish everybody had—suppose he has machinery in his mill, merchandise in his warehouse, ships upon the ocean, or that he has shares, or the parchments for them, in his safe—if he dies, the Government by the law, or rather the law itself, makes a distribution of all that property amongst all his children, in accordance with the great universal law of natural parental affection and justice. Then, I say, let that principle be extended to all the property which a man may die possessed of; and, so far as that goes, I want no further change. Then, with regard to the question of entails, I would say this: the *Spectator* proposes that a man, by entailing his property—so far as I can understand—shall only prevent himself and his next heir from disposing of it—that there shall be, in point of fact, only two persons in the entail. Now, what I propose is, that a man may leave his property to as many persons as he likes, to A, B, C, D, and E and F, and so on all through the alphabet, if they are all alive at the time he makes his will, and he can put all their names into it. But at present he can leave it to these people, and to a child then unborn, and who shall not be born, it may be, till twenty years after he has made his will. I would cut that off. I contend that it should be left to persons who are in existence, and whose names are in the will, and you will find that as A, B, and C died it would finally come into the hands of a man who would have the absolute disposal of, and who could keep, or sell, or give, or waste as he pleased.

“And I believe it will be much better for the public when that freedom of transfer is given to the possessors of land which is given to the possessors of every kind of property. If I were to sit down for ten minutes and a lawyer were to take my place, he could tell you what a trouble our law is: and—although I am sorry that some of them think that they make a good thing out of it—what a curse it is to a man who buys landed property or who sells it. Everything which I am proposing is carried out, I believe, through most of the States in the American Union, and to a greater extent on the Continent of Europe, and is being adopted in the Australian colonies. It is the most curious thing in the world, that whenever an Englishman leaves these shores—whether it is the effect of the salt air, or of sea-sickness, or the result of that prolonged meditation which a voyage of some weeks’ duration invites, I do not know—but whenever an Englishman leaves these shores, the effect is to peel off, not the rags of his body, but the verminous rags from his intellect and soul. He leaves behind him in England all the stupidity which some of us cherish, and he lands in Australia with his vision so clear, that he can see things in a common-sense manner. . . . When a man looks upon those children that make even in the poorest house sometimes a gleam of joy, when he thinks what those boys and girls must be in this country—never to rise one step higher than that which he occupies now as an agricultural labourer and when he looks abroad and he sees them not labourers in the sense we use the word here—not tenants even, but freeholders, and landowners, and farmers of their own property, then, I say, the temptation held out to men here to emigrate—if men knew all the facts—would be irresistible to hundreds of thousands who have now no thought of moving to another country. . . . There is, you know, a great tendency to large farms throughout this country, which makes it still more difficult for a labourer even to become a tenant, or ever to rise from the condition he is in. I think travellers tell us there is a tribe in Africa so given to superstition that they fill their huts and hovels with so many idols that they do not even leave room for their families. It may be so in this country, that we build up a system which is detrimental to our political freedom and is destructive of the best interests of the great mass of our producing and working-classes. (Cheers.) Now, am I the enemy of any class because I come forward to state facts like these and to explain principles such as these? (Cheers.) Shall we go on groping continually in the dark and making no effort to show them our position? Do not suppose because I stand here oftener to find fault with the laws of our country than to praise them that I am less English or less patriotic, or that I have less sympathy with my countrymen than other men have. (Cheers.) I want our country to be populous, to be powerful, and to be happy; but this end can be attained, and it never has been attained in any country, only by just laws, justly administered. I plead only for what I think to be just. I wish to do wrong to no man. For 25 years I have stood before audiences—great meetings of my countrymen—pleading only for justice. (Great cheering.) During that time, as you know, I have endured numberless insults, have passed through hurricanes of abuse. I need not tell you that my clients have not generally been the rich and the great, but the poor and the lowly. They cannot give me place, and dignities,

and wealth, but their honourable service is of far higher and more lasting value—the consciousness that I have been expounding and upholding laws, which, though they were not given amid the thunders of Sinai, are not the less the commandments of God, and not the less intended to promote and secure the happiness of men.” (Prolonged and enthusiastic cheers.)

On January 29th, 1864, Mr. Bright was entertained at a *soirée* at the Royal Hotel, Birmingham, and in responding to a toast, “Success to the patriotic labours of the members of this borough,” he said :—

“It is the very existence of grievances which calls me from the quiet of my home and from the pursuits of my own family; and whenever I find that there is nothing for me to do but to say what a happy people we are, and how delightful it is to be under the government of Lord Palmerston and his Whig colleagues, then I can assure you that I will not trouble you with saying that. I shall leave you to find it out and shall stay at home. (Cheers.) But still there is a bright side in the prospects of England, and you may see some of it probably, looking forward, and you may see a good deal of it looking backward. The bright side of the history of the country, so long as I have been able to take any part in it, is that side on which are delineated the changes that have taken place—changes which I, at any rate, have the satisfaction of knowing that I have supported, and changes which no doubt many of those who wish me to speak in a different tone have to the utmost of their power opposed. (Hear, hear.) . . . A very eminent writer, not long ago, said that England, to a very large extent, was still, as it were, fettered in the grave-clothes of the middle ages. We have a competition to run with other nations, and most closely of all with that nation now distracted and in the throes of a great revolution. But we have within our shores, and within the limits of these islands, a great and noble people. (Cheers.) We have within us the elements of a nation far greater in the future than anything we have been in the past, even in the most renowned and most glorious pages of history. We can set ourselves free from prejudices, and as it were from the darkness of the past. We can give to our people education. We can open up to them new sources of industry. We can reduce the expenditure of our government. We can invite another million or two within the pale of the constitution, and taking them by the hand ask counsel of them that we may assist each other in the wise government of this great nation. (Cheers.) All this we can do, and all that it wants is that in working out our political problems we should take for our foundation that which recommends itself to our consciences as just and moral. I have not the slightest regard for your statesmanship that is divorced from the morality which we said ought to guide us in our private life, and which we should gather, for a nation as for individuals, from the religion which we profess. Time, persistent labour, and fidelity to the great principles which we hold and believe in—(cheers)—this will certainly give us the victory over existing evils, as similar qualities and similar conduct have given the victories I have described to you in the sketch which I have made.” (Cheers.)

A young man of position, named Townley, this year was sentenced to death for the murder of his sweetheart named Goodwin, who had broken off the engagement. A report made under the Lunacy Act, to the effect that Townley was insane, was submitted to the Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, who commuted the sentence to penal servitude for life, although another medical report declared that he was perfectly sane. About the same time a man named Wright murdered his wife in London, and he pleaded guilty of the crime, and urged in his defence that the unfortunate woman had threatened to take his life. The public contrasted these two murders, and got impressed with the idea that

the one criminal was reprieved because of his high position, while the other—the poor man—was executed. This general impression was unjust, for Townley was really insane, as his subsequent suicide evidenced. Accordingly, Sir George Grey introduced a Bill for the amendment of the Insane Prisoners' Act, for the purpose of preventing a recurrence of such difficulties as had presented themselves in the cases of Townley and Wright. Mr. Bright took part in the discussion on this Bill, and contended that the punishment of death was antagonistic to the best and noblest sentiments of the noblest portion of the people. On the 3rd of May Mr. Ewart again brought forward his motion for the abolition of the punishment of death.

"There can be no doubt whatever that if capital punishment be retained," said Mr. Bright in the discussion, "and if it be absolutely necessary that there should be a crime called murder to which capital punishment attaches, it is no less necessary that there should be, as there are in some other countries, three or four degrees of manslaughter, and that for the highest degree of manslaughter there should be the highest kind of secondary punishment, and that the power should be placed in the hands of the jury of determining what should be the particular class in which the criminal should be placed. There is no doubt that this is necessary to be done. I think Voltaire—who said a good many things that are worth remembering—remarked that the English were the only people who murdered by law. And Mirabeau, when in this country, hearing of a number of persons who had been hanged on a certain morning, said, 'The English nation is the most merciless of any that I have heard or read of.' And at this very moment, when we have struck off within the last fifty years at least a hundred offences which were then capital, we remain still in this matter the most merciless of Christian countries."

After a long debate, the following resolution was agreed to:—

"That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that she will be graciously pleased to issue a Royal Commission to inquire into the provisions and operation of the laws under which the punishment of death is now inflicted in the United Kingdom, and the manner in which it is inflicted; and to report whether it is desirable to make any alteration therein."

Mr. Bright entertains the opinion that severe punishments and halts are not the most efficacious means for raising the morality of a nation or for preventing outrages against person and property, but that in proportion as a people become well instructed and comfortable, so will they become free from crime, and be happy.

The promoters of the Atlantic Telegraph Company dined together at the Palace Hotel, London, on the 22nd of April, 1864, under the presidency of Mr. Cyrus Field, who, in proposing the health of Mr. Bright, expressed a wish that the hon. gentleman would visit the United States, where, he promised him, he would be received with an ovation such as no living man ever received. The only danger was that all the male children born in the course of the year in which he might so honour them would

be named after him, and instead of being Browns and Joneses, they would be all John Brights. Mr. Bright replied :—

"I might very easily rob Mr. Field of the originality of the statement he has made of what might happen were I to pay a visit to the United States. I have in the course of time received many letters from gentlemen in his country, and one of them did say there were several penalties I should have to endure as the consequences of my visit to America, and one of them was, he thought, that nearly all the children there would have to be called after me. (Hear, hear, and laughter). If this and a great many other dreadful things which he thought would follow my visit be true, I am, I think, very prudent in staying in this country. I have never been in America, but for thirty years, which is a long time to look back to, I have had a strong wish to go there, but most of us Englishmen find so much to do in the conduct and management of our own regular business, that a six months' absence is not a thing easy to accomplish. . . . When the news reached us that the last cable was laid, did it not make a revolution and a shock? Did not every man feel that a new world and a new time were opened to him? It was, I recollect, just at the time when some great work was being inaugurated at Cherbourg, under the auspices of the French Emperor, and which sank into insignificance compared with such glorious news, and everybody felt, as everybody must have felt 400 years ago, when the simple adventurous sailor of Genoa had opened a new world to the knowledge of mankind. But he only discovered to Europe what I may be permitted to call an unoccupied wilderness, but this project is one to unite 30 millions of people to the 250 millions who inhabit this continent of Europe; and passing from the days of Columbus, I know of no event in history comparable in grandeur and sublimity (if we look at its results) with that magnificent enterprise to which Mr. Field has devoted his talents and his life." (Cheers).

Mr. Lawson moved the second reading of the "Permissive Bill" on the 8th of June, and Captain Jervis its rejection. Mr. Bright gave his opinion on the subject.

"I believe," he remarked, "there are two modes of remedy: the first of which is the improvement and instruction of the people—(cheers)—and the second, the special legislation of the House. Now, I am one of those who look rather to the improvement and education of the people—(cheers)—for a permanent remedy, and I think it is quite conclusive that that must be the sheet anchor, as it were, of this question. (Hear, hear.) There are hon. members of this House older than I am, but I am old enough to remember when drunkenness was ten or twenty times more common among a particular class of society than it is at present. I have been in this House twenty years, and during that time I have often partaken of the hospitality of various members of the House who are in the habit of inviting their friends to dinner, and I must confess that, during the whole of the twenty years, I have no recollection of having seen one single person at any gentleman's table who has been in the condition which would be at all fairly described by saying he was drunk. (Laughter and cheers.) And I may say more—that I do not recollect more than two or three occasions during that time in which I have observed, by the utterance, rapidity of talking, or perhaps a somewhat recklessness of conversation, that any gentleman had taken so much as to impair his judgment. (Hear, hear.) That is not the state of things which prevailed in this country fifty or sixty years ago. (Hear, hear.) We know, therefore, as respects this class of people, who can always have as much of these pernicious articles as they desire to have, because the price of them is no object, that temperance has made great way, and if it were possible to make all classes in this country as temperate as those of whom I have just spoken, we should be amongst the very soberest nations of the earth." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright concluded a lengthy speech by saying that he could not give his vote in favour of the Bill. In another speech in 1874, at the annual convocation of the Society of Friends, Mr. Bright stated that he would not say he had abstained for

so long as 35 years, but for 34 years—from the time he became a householder—he had not bought any wine or spirituous liquors whatever. He had in his house no decanters, and he thought he had no wine-glasses, and had not had them since 1839, when he took to housekeeping. It had cost him some inconvenience and trouble, but altogether he had had no occasion to regret the step he then took. He did not on this account profess to be better than other people.

The Bill was thrown out by a majority of 257.

At a meeting in Birmingham, on the 11th of January, 1870, Mr. Bright again referred to the subject of temperance by saying:—

“It is a fact that no Government, that no administration, that no laws, and that no amount of industry or of commerce, that no extent of freedom, can give prosperity and solid comfort in the homes of the people, unless there be in those homes, economy, temperance, and the practice of virtue. (Great cheering.) This is needful for all, but it is especially needful—most needful in some respects—for those whose possessions are the least abundant and the least secured. (Hear, hear.) If we could subtract from the ignorance, the poverty, the suffering, the sickness, and the crime which are now witnessed amongst us, the ignorance, the poverty, the suffering, the sickness, and the crime which are caused by one single—but the most prevalent—habit or vice of drinking needlessly, which destroys the body, and mind, and home, and family, do we not all feel that this country would be so changed, and so changed for the better, that it would be almost impossible for us to know it again? (Loud cheers.) Let me then, in conclusion, say what is upon my heart to say; what I know to be true; what I have felt every hour of my life when I have been discussing great questions affecting the condition of the working classes. Let me say this to all the people: that it is by a combination of a wise Government and a virtuous people, and not otherwise—mark that, and not otherwise—that we may hope to make some steps towards that blessed time when there shall be no longer complaining in our streets, and when our garners shall be full, affording all manner of store.” (Enthusiastic cheers.)

In August, 1864, two noble trees, three hundred feet high and twenty feet in diameter, and sixty feet circumference, growing in “Big Grove,” San Francisco, were christened by the inhabitants of the district by the names of “John Bright” and “Richard Cobden,” out of respect for the champions of the Union cause in England. Two oblong tablets of white California marble, bearing the respective names, were fastened to the trees.

Mr. Cobden addressed his constituents in Messrs. Robinsons’ machine works, Fishwick Street, Rochdale, on the 23rd of November, 1864, and about 5,000 persons were accommodated within that extensive building. Mr. Alderman Tatham occupied the chair. Mr. Bright, on account of the death of his son, Leonard, at Llandudno, on the 7th of the same month, was prevented from being present, and at the time of the meeting was staying at Leamington. Mr. Cobden expressed the hope that Mr. Bright “may take consolation by the consciousness of the deep feeling of sympathy and sorrow with which his

bereavement had been learned." The absence of Mr. Bright threw a depressing influence over the meeting, and it was quite apparent that the sympathetic feeling was general. Mr. Cobden's speech ranged over the whole field of political controversy, sifted every question of foreign and home policy, and illuminated with the electric-light of genius even the darkest recesses of the Schleswig-Holstein quarrel. It was considered a very able speech; and Mr. Bright, when he read it, remarked that he wondered how Cobden could make such a speech when times were so dull.

The next evening Mr. Cobden met about two hundred of the leading Liberals of Rochdale at Beechwood, the residence of the late Mr. George Tawke Kemp, J.P., and, in relating the occurrence to a friend, stated that he spent the whole of the evening in shaking hands and incessantly talking to relays of friends, and that he would have been well enough if he could have gone to bed for four-and-twenty hours after the speech. The fatigue, the exposure, and the worry of the long homeward journey brought on "nervous asthma," which so obstructed his breathing that he could hardly move a limb, and an attack of bronchitis threatened to extend to his lungs. For several months he did not venture out of his residence, on account of the weather being so severe, and he longed for summer weather.

The Birmingham new Exchange was opened by the Mayor of that town on the 2nd of January, 1865. At the luncheon, Mr. Bright said:—

"I think that manufacturers and merchants, as a rule, have generally been either too modest, or they have not been sufficiently acquainted with their true position. My opinion is—looking at the course of history—that merchants and manufacturers, in the aggregate, are gradually becoming much more important in the world than warriors and statesmen—(applause)—and even than monarchs themselves, for it is obvious to me that the power of these heretofore great authorities is waning, and that in every part of the world the power of the great industrial interest is sensibly waxing. (Applause.) But if we were to take down the volume of history, which may be called the chart of the past ages, we should see, I think clearly, that a stream of commerce runs close alongside the stream of freedom and civilisation. (Cheers.) It is a long time to look back to those old merchants and mariners who are said to have come from the coast of Asia to this country in pursuit of one of the produces of our mines. But the Phœnicians were a great people because they were merchants and given to maritime pursuits, and it needs but the most superficial knowledge of history to enable us to remember that from them came the arts, the civilisation, and the greatness of the Greek states in Europe, and at the same time the greatness and commercial splendour of the city of Carthage on the African continent. From them and from Greece came the populous commercial colonies of Italy and Sicily; and Carthage, though comparatively early destroyed, yet left its traces upon France and upon Spain. Then, coming down to the period where history is more complete and more accurate, we find that in the cities of the north of Italy, commerce is attended by arts and letters, and freedom and civilisation, to an extent which, considering the conditions of other parts of the world, is at least beautiful to contemplate and most remarkable. And the great commercial republics of Genoa and Venice have left their mark in history, which time itself can never efface. (Cheers.) Coming down to a period somewhat later,

we find the commercial cities of the Netherlands taking a part in the history of Europe equally important, and being themselves equally devoted to arts and civilisation and freedom. Passing the narrow Straits and the narrow Channel, and coming to our own loved land, we find here that precisely as commerce has extended and industry has been respected towns and cities have grown and populations have congregated together; and from that source, and not from monarchs or from great lords of the soil, but from that source mainly has come whatever there is of social, or civil, or religious, or industrial freedom to the inhabitants of this island.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright next addressed his constituents in the Birmingham Town Hall, principally on Parliamentary Reform, on the 18th of January. He spoke for an hour and thirty-five minutes, remarking :—

“But this, I suspect, is what they fear. I have sought a good deal into this question, and it seems to me as if they had a notion that in this country we have some institutions which have come down to us from the middle ages—from what some people call the dark ages—and that these institutions may not permanently harmonise with the intelligence and the necessities of the nineteenth century in which we live. The ‘institutions’ are truly safe enough if the Government be in the hands of the institution; and if the Peerage and the Established Church are to rule in England, then I presume that the Peerage and the Established Church, in their present condition, will be permanently safe; and if the great patronage of our vast expenditure is to be dispensed perpetually amongst the ruling class, the ruling class as a matter of course will take extreme care of the patronage. There is something very sacred in that patronage. There are many families in this country with long lines of ancestry, who, if patronage were curtailed, would feel very much as some of us feel in Lancashire when the American war has stopped our supplies of cotton. They look upon patronage as a holy thing, not to be touched by profane hands. I have no doubt they have in their minds the saying of a great friend of mine, though he is an imaginary character—I mean Hosea Biglow, the author of the *Biglow Papers*. He says—

‘It is something like a fulfilling the prophecies,
When all the first families have all the best offices.’

... England has long been famous for the enjoyment of personal freedom by her people. They are free to think, they are free to speak, they are free to write; and England has been famed of late years, and is famed now the world over, for the freedom of her industry and the greatness and freedom of her commerce. I want to know, then, why it is that her people should not be free to vote? (Cheers.) Who is there that will meet me on this platform, or will stand upon any platform, and will dare to say, in the hearing of an open meeting of his countrymen, that these millions for whom I am now pleading are too degraded, too vicious, and too destructive to be entrusted with the elective franchise? I, at least, will never thus slander my countrymen. I claim for them the right of admission, through their representatives, into the most ancient and the most venerable Parliament which at this hour exists among men; and when they are thus admitted, and not till then, it may be truly said that England, the august mother of free nations, herself is free.” (Great cheering.)

On the 10th of February Mr. Cobden received a letter from Mr. Gladstone on behalf of the Government, offering him the lucrative office of Chairman of the Board of Audit, which was worth £2,000 a year. Mr. Cobden, after giving the subject two days’ consideration, declined it, stating that :—

“Owing to the state of my health, I am precluded from taking any office which involves the performance of stated duties at all seasons of the year, or leaves a sense of responsibility for the fulfilment of those duties by others.”

He stated further—

"But were my case different, still, while sensible of the kind intentions which prompted the offer, it would assuredly not be consulting my welfare to place me in the post in question, with my known views respecting the nature of our finance. Believing, as I do, that while the income of the Government is derived in a greater proportion than in any other country from the taxation of the humblest classes, its expenditure is to the last degree wasteful and indefensible, it would be almost a penal appointment to consign me for the remainder of my life to the task of passively auditing our finance accounts. I fear my health would sicken and my days be shortened by the nauseous ordeal. It will be better that I retain my seat in Parliament, as long as I am able in any tolerable degree to perform its duties, where I have at least the opportunity of protesting, however unavailingly, against the Government expenditure."

Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald on the 3rd of March introduced into the House of Commons the subject of the defences of Canada, which led to a lively debate. Mr. Bright's speech on this occasion was eloquent and impressive throughout. Although his sentiments were not palatable to the great body of his hearers, he absorbed the attention of a full House, and sat down amidst the general cheering of all parties.

"Going back nearly four years," said Mr. Bright, "we recollect what occurred when the news arrived of the first shot having been fired at Fort Sumter. That, I think, was about the 12th of April. Immediately after that time it was announced that a new Minister was coming to this country. Mr. Dallas had intimated to the Government that as he did not represent the new President he would rather not undertake anything of importance; but that his successor was on his way and would arrive on such a day. When a man leaves New York on a given day, you can calculate to about twelve hours when he will be in London. Mr. Adams, I think, arrived in London about the 13th of May, and when he opened his newspaper next morning he found the Proclamation of Neutrality, acknowledging the belligerent rights of the South. I say that the proper course to have taken would have been to have waited till Mr. Adams arrived here, and to have discussed the matter with him in a friendly manner, explaining the ground upon which the English Government had felt themselves bound to issue that proclamation, and representing that it was not done in any manner as an unfriendly act towards the United States Government. But no precaution whatever was taken: it was done with unfriendly haste; and it had this effect: that it gave comfort and courage to the conspiracy at Montgomery and at Richmond, and caused great grief and irritation amongst that portion of the people of America who were most strongly desirous of maintaining friendly relations between their country and England. . . . I believe, on the other hand, that the American people, when this excitement is over, will be willing, so far as regards any aggressive acts against us, to bury in oblivion transactions which have given them much pain, and they will probably make an allowance, which they may fairly make—that the people of this country, even those high in rank and distinguished in culture, have had a very inadequate knowledge of the transactions which have really taken place in that country since the beginning of the war. Now, it is on record that when the author of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" was about beginning his great work, David Hume wrote a letter to him, urging him not to employ the French but the English tongue, because, he said, 'our establishments in America promise a superior stability and duration to the English language.' How far the promise has been in part fulfilled we who are living now can tell. But how far it will be more largely and more completely fulfilled in after-times we must leave for after times to tell. I believe, however, that in the centuries which are to come, it will be the greatest pride, and the highest renown, of England, that from her loins have sprung a hundred—it may be two hundred—millions of men to dwell and to prosper on the continent which the old Genoas gave to Europe. Now, Sir, if the sentiment which I have heard to-night shall become the sentiment of the Parliament and the people of the United Kingdom, and if the moderation which I have described

shall mark the course of the Government and people of the United States, then, notwithstanding some present irritation and some fresh distrust—and I have faith, mind, both in us and in them—I believe that these two great commonwealths may march on abreast, parents and guardians of freedom and justice wheresoever their language shall be spoken and their power shall extend.” (Great cheering.)

Lord Hartington, a few days after, proposed a vote of £50,000 for the fortification of Quebec, being part of a sum of £200,000 which would be asked for the defence of Canada. Mr. Bright opposed the vote, but the motion was carried by a large majority. Mr. Cobden left his residence for the purpose of opposing this expenditure of money, and Mr. Bright, in alluding to the circumstance at a public meeting at Bradford, said :—

“You know how much he sympathised, I will not say with the institutions, but with the interests of the United States. He visited that country twice during the course of his life, and he made there—as he made wherever he went—many very earnest and very warm friends. He, I think, was more broken down in heart and feeling by the American war than perhaps any other man that I happened to know at that time in England. He had thought that in that country, spreading over a whole continent, there would be perpetual peace. There was no great army, there was no great navy, there were no foreign politics, and he thought that America was the home of peace. But he had not calculated the effect of a vast enormity like the question of slavery in that country. (Hear, hear.) Slavery was one of those devils that would not go out without tearing the nation that was possessed of it. (Hear, hear.) But still he always held the belief that the result of the war would be slavery abolished, and the great Republic still one and indivisible, and henceforth, as he hoped it might be, the advocate of peace and the promoter of civilisation.”

On the 4th of March, 1865, Mr. Bright visited Mr. Cobden at Midhurst, and has thus beautifully described what took place :—

“We strolled out in the fields, and as we were returning home he began to talk of his poor boy, his only son, who had died some nine or ten years before; and he said—turning round and pointing to a beautiful little church in a most lovely situation—‘Yes, my poor boy lies there, and I shall very soon be with him.’ I little thought how soon. Only a few days afterwards he went up to London. It was a time when the question of expending large sums on an absurd and monstrous idea of defending Canada from the United States was under discussion. He went up to London with the intention of speaking upon that question, and pointing out to the House of Commons the foolish and irrational course on which they were invited to enter. He went up on one of the bitterest days of that month of March, and he was stricken by the cold, and fatally stricken. Only some ten days afterwards, I think, his complaint became greatly aggravated, and on that 2nd of April that I have spoken of I was at his room, early in the morning, and remained with him during some unconscious hours, until the final close of a life to which I felt myself, and have always felt myself, so strongly attached. . . . Now, my friend did not see the fulfilment of his wishes. It was a circumstance somewhat singular, and very affecting to my mind, that on the very day when President Lincoln and the Northern forces entered the city of Richmond, and when, in point of fact, the slave confederacy was vanquished and at an end—on that very day, on that very Sunday, that 2nd of April, in the year 1865, the spirit of my friend left its earthly tenement, and took its way to another, and to him, doubtless, a brighter world.”

Mr. Cobden was accompanied to London by Mrs. Cobden and his second daughter on the 21st of March; and they took

apartments in Suffolk Street. Shortly after he arrived he was attacked with asthma, which prostrated him. For days a piercing east wind blew, and Cobden watched attentively the smoke from the opposite chimneys to ascertain if the wind changed its course, but his eager vigilance ended in weariness and disappointment. The asthma became congestive on the 1st of April, and bronchitis setting in, recovery fast became hopeless. His old and true friend, Mr. Bright, paid him a visit in the evening; but as it was thought that the interview would be too much for his little remaining strength, Mr. Bright retired without seeing him. Early next morning, which was Sunday, he repeated his visit, and as all chance of recovery was now beyond expectation, he formed one of the group who affectionately witnessed the closing scene, with Sabbath peace, of the life of one of the greatest benefactors of his country. Just as the church bells of the great metropolis, and every town and village in England, were sweetly chiming, and calling worshippers to their devotions on that hallowed morning, and blessed groups of children, as well as those of maturer years, were wending through quiet streets and primrose meadow-paths towards spires and towers, Cobden's generous heart ceased to throb, and in complete possession of his intellect he expired, at the age of 61, and left "a void and silent place in his sweet home."

Throughout England his death was deeply lamented. Indeed, all Europe and the world were quick to recognise the loss which they had sustained in common with us; for this great statesman did much to hasten the day when conciliated nations shall war with each other no more. He entered upon life with none of the advantages of birth or fortune; singled himself out by his ability and patriotism for the service of his country; was called continually to higher measures of duty; moved with steady progress to still loftier applications of his principles; adhered to them with heroic patience, through evil and good report; brought statesmen to sit at his feet and accept him as a master; wedded nations in the bonds of reciprocal goodwill; turned away from the honours which were decreed him with the simplicity of one who loved truth for her own sake; and finally resigned to the disposal of his God a life which, in its public relations, no self-interest had ever warped; no inconsistency had ever misdirected; no blot had ever stained; and whose memory shall be held in honour so long as truth and justice are the master powers of the world. He showed how in England we may build up a constitution upon the principles of justice and truth.

The beauty of his character, and the services he had ren-

dered to his country, were appreciated by all parties, and it was felt that a great and good life had closed in the zenith of its fame. "He died full of years and glory, as illustrious by the honours he refused as by those he accepted," and left a pure and spotless name, crowned with a halo of inimitable splendour. His past life formed an interesting picture: unceasing labour and self-sacrifice on the altar of high duty.

His remains were removed to his residence at Midhurst, one of the loveliest spots in England. "Its hills are covered with foliage, its valleys bright with verdure or teeming with fertility, alternating with dark sombre-looking heaths, sandy patches, and trim, silent, old-fashioned villages, and isolated farmhouses built in the days of the Tudors."

There was an unusual scene at the House of Commons on the Monday afternoon. The members were in the halls and lobbies long before the hour of sitting, whispering in groups. Just as the deep-toned Westminster clock tolled four, Lord Palmerston, followed by the other members of the Cabinet, entered the House amidst hushed silence. Every eye seemed to be in search of one familiar figure as the assembly rapidly increased; and at last there was seen approaching, with sorrowful countenance and bowed head, the friend of one whose vacant seat by his side would never be filled again.

Lord Palmerston, with his whitened locks and dejected appearance, who had witnessed the leading men of more than two generations fall one by one along the weary wayside of life, rose, and spoke of the great loss the House and the nation had sustained, and so affected was he that his voice quivered, and then sank into a low tone that was deeply pathetic. Mr. Disraeli, who for years had combated the arguments of the politician whose loss the House now deplored, next rose, and generously said:—

"I believe that when the verdict of posterity is recorded on his (Cobden's) life and conduct, it will be said of him that, looking to all that he said and did, he was without doubt the greatest political character the pure middle class of this country has yet produced—an ornament to the House of Commons, and an honour to England."

After a brief and impressive pause, Mr. Bright rose, evidently oppressed with great sorrow. Twice he essayed to speak, but his voice failed him. At length, with broken utterance, but with eloquent simplicity, he said:—

"Sir, I feel that I cannot address the House on this occasion; but every expression of sympathy which I have witnessed has been most grateful to my heart. (Noble John Bright here betrayed strong emotion, but recovering himself proceeded.) But the time which has elapsed since I was present, when the manliest and gentlest spirit that has ever quitted or tenanted a human form departed this life, is so short that I dare not even attempt to give utterance to the feelings by which I

am oppressed. (Mr. Bright here for a moment paused, and covered his face with his hands.) I shall leave to some calmer moment, when I may have an opportunity of speaking to some portion of my countrymen, the exposition of the lesson which I think may be learned from the life and character of my friend. (Kear, hear, and applause.) I have only to say, after twenty years of intimate and almost brotherly friendship with him, I little knew how much I loved him until I found that I had lost him."

Mr. Bright's broken words of sorrow were with difficulty spoken, but they plaintively told his sense of loneliness, and he sat down amid the sympathetic applause of the House.

At the time of his death Cobden was on the verge of the sunset of life, and before the winter of age had chilled the warm impulses of his heart, or dulled the edge of his wit, or changed the force and elegance of his language into laborious vagueness. He was still as susceptible of tenderness and love as at any period of his existence, and the more so from the oppressive conviction that the day was not distant when the grave must for ever chill his heart against the endearments for which it panted. When autumn strewed the valleys with the honours of the woods, he often remarked that the decay of nature was full of instruction for us, who blossomed for a while, and then similarly decayed. In his simple study, on a little table set apart from the desk at which he toiled, there always lay the Bible, that it might be ready to his hand. Mr. Bright, in alluding to an incident at the funeral, in one of his memorable speeches, said:—

"Standing by me, and leaning on the coffin, was his sorrowing daughter, one whose attachment to her father seems to have been a passion scarcely equalled amongst daughters. She said, 'My father used to like me very much to read to him the Sermon on the Mount.' His own life was to a large extent—I speak it with reverence and with hesitation—a sermon based upon that best, that greatest of all sermons. His life was a life of perpetual self-sacrifice."

When at home, Mr. Cobden was regularly seen on Sundays walking with his family along a pretty country path to West Lavington Church; but he was not the man to parade his religious sentiments or feelings. Writing to a friend several years before his death, he stated:—

"I am not without hopes that if I am spared to return in health to this country, the same fortunate circumstance in my organisation may enable me to co-operate efficiently with the most active and best spirits of our day in the work of moral and intellectual education. I could insist upon the necessity of secular teaching and training without wounding the religious prejudices of any man, except the grovelling bigots, whether of the High Church party or the opposite extreme, against whom I could make war in the same spirit which has, in the case of the corn monopolists, enabled me to deprive them of the pretence for personal resentment, even in the hour of their defeat and humiliation. I have said that I have a strong feeling of sympathy for the religious sentiment. A feeling so great that I have sat in a Welsh chapel, listening to a ranting sermon, not a syllable of which I understood, and watching with pleasing excitement the effects upon the countenances of the hearers; their glistening eyes, and compressed lips, and outstretched heads, were eloquence enough in themselves for me! But I sympathise with all moral men who are not passive moralists."

He had great faith in the power of prayer, and when the poor operatives of Lancashire were suffering severe privations from the want of employment during the cotton famine, he remarked to the vicar of his parish, "Ah, there is need that we should pray for the poor people in the North." He was most liberal to the poor, and homely and familiar with all those with whom he came into contact. In the whole of his public life there was a Catholicity of spirit, which marked all his aims and inspired all his teachings, although he lived in an age when the traditional policy of statesmen was still struggling against the idea of human brotherhood, and opposing those sublime lessons which point to the happy day when kingdoms shall be knit together by commerce, and when nations shall learn war no more.

Many of Mr. Cobden's friends wished that his final resting-place should be Westminster Abbey, but a pompous sepulchre, with a life so simple and self-denying as was his, would have been utterly incongruous; and, moreover, it must be remembered that it was his desire to be buried with his son in the pretty churchyard of West Lavington. Nine years before his death, one summer's day while strolling in Westminster Abbey with a friend, he remarked that, although he had for fifteen years habitually passed St. Paul's Cathedral, he had never been within its walls. As they were reading the monuments of the illustrious dead, the friend casually remarked that the time might come when the name of Cobden would there be seen amongst the departed heroes. Cobden replied, "I hope not. My spirit could not rest in peace amongst these men of war. No, no; cathedrals are not meant to contain the remains of such men as Bright and me." He preferred to sleep amongst his own people, the undistinguished dead of a Sussex village, and pressed by the flowery turf where once he played in childhood, where his obsequies might be sung by the gray plover flying, and the soaring lark. This was the place of sepulture preferred by him to the costly and luxurious memorials of Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, where many are buried who were torments and scourges to their day and generation, and "laid schemes for death, and to slaughter turned their hearts"—made towns and villages solitudes, and called it peace. And here, too, has often been heard unholy thanksgiving over slaughtered men, women, and children. Benefactors of the world are also interred here—men who enlightened it by their wisdom, animated it with their gaiety, or soothed it by their delightful harmonies.

The sad ceremonial of committing the body to the ground

was performed on the 7th of April, and for the numbers and the character of those attending, it was one of the most remarkable funerals on record. The House of Commons led the van with a large gathering of the most eminent of its members, and the Court was represented by the Pagets. There were deputations from most of the large towns, that from Rochdale being composed of Messrs. J. Tatham (the Mayor), Thomas Bright, G. L. Ashworth, R. T. Heape, T. B. Willans, G. Healey, William Fenton, G. T. Kemp, E. Ashworth, J. T. Pagan, J. H. Moore, John Robinson, T. Booth, W. Petrie, G. Mansell, J. Ashworth, John Hoyle, C. Whitaker, R. Hurst, and S. Stott.

The procession was over half a mile in length. The hearse was without "nodding plumes," or barren pomp, or trappings of woe. The utmost simplicity characterised the whole of the arrangements. A walk of an hour and a half along the picturesque highway, the banks of which were fretted with primroses and violets, the embroidery of spring, brought the mourners to West Lavington Church. The pall was held by twelve of Mr. Cobden's most distinguished friends, namely, Mr. John Bright, M.P.; the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.; the Right Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, M.P.; Mr. George Wilson; the Right Hon. T. Milner Gibson, M.P.; Mr. Moffatt, M.P., Mr. T. B. Potter, Mr. A. W. Paulton, Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. Bazley, M.P., Mr. William Evans, and Mr. Thomas Thomasson. The chief mourners were Mr. Charles Cobden; Mr. William Sale, of Manchester, his brother-in-law; Mr. John Williams, brother of Mrs. Cobden; Mr. Frederick Hogard, Mr. Charles F. Kirk, Mr. William Sale, junr., Mr. Rhodes, Mr. Fisher, and Mr. Fisher, junr. The service having been gone through in the church, which was not large enough to accommodate the vast number of mourners, the coffin was borne to the vault which lies at the southern extremity of the graveyard, in which his son, who died in Germany, was interred. The scene was most impressive. The sun shone out in all its splendour, and threw a glow of light on the uncovered and bended heads and sad faces of not a few of England's master-spirits. The foot of the coffin was adorned with wreaths of spring flowers which had been gathered and woven by loving hands. As the coffin was lowered, Mr. Bright, with a sorrowful and tear-besprinkled face, advanced near to the brink of the grave which was so soon to close over the remains of his departed friend. There stood, too, Mr. Gladstone, with face unnaturally pale and closed eyes, in company with Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Villiers, Mr.

George Wilson, Mr. Edward Miall, Mr. W. E. Forster, Mr. Robertson Gladstone, the Rev. Newman Hall, Dr. Hook (the Dean of Chichester), Mr. T. B. Potter, Mr. Elihu Burritt, Mr. Samuel Morley, Mr. Bazley, Sir C. Wentworth Dilke, Professor Fawcett, Mr. Samuel Smiles, Mr. Adams (the American Minister), and a host of other well-known men.

It was touching to witness the anxiety of the mourners to preserve some memento, not only of the churchyard but also of the spot where Mr. Cobden had resided, by gathering ferns, flowers, and shrubs from the paths which had been trod by the departed statesman. The churchyard from that day was destined to have a memorable historic interest, but the whole land is the sepulchre of this illustrious benefactor of his country, and his good deeds are his imperishable monument.

No sound ruder than the whistling of the wind, the crack of the ploughman's whip or the sportsman's gun, disturbs the quietude and peace of the scene of this pastoral loveliness. The earliest light of the morning gilds the tomb, and parting day lingers and plays upon it. Thither at times his life companions will direct their pilgrim feet, to see

"The tomb of him who would have made
The world too glad and free."

Amongst the numerous pilgrims to this sacred place, the Bishop of Oxford was accompanied there, on the 16th of August, 1868, by Lord and Lady Stratford de Redcliffe, Lady Marion Alford, and Lady Dorothy Nevill. The Dean of St. Paul's and party visited it on the 12th of March, 1869. Several members of the Anti-Corn-Law League paid homage at the shrine of their departed friend on the 24th of June, 1871. Dowager Lady Northbrook was there on the 12th of July, 1871. Mr. John Bright, accompanied by two of his daughters, Miss M. H. Bright and Miss M. S. Bright, again visited the tomb on the 25th of August, 1874. In December of that year the Earl and Countess of Egmont paid their respects to the illustrious dead, and the Mayor of Portsmouth and members of his Town Council stood reverently round the grave on a bright summer's day in 1877.

From the crest of the hill upon the slope of which the graveyard stands, the eye ranges over a charming landscape. In the far distance stretches the range of the South Downs, from Worthington in the east to Petersfield in the west, a distance of at least thirty miles; the valley being thickly wooded with pine, oak, and fir,

Mr. Bright, when performing the ceremony of unveiling a statue of Cobden, at Bradford, in July, 1877, said:—

“I have lately been reading a new poem which has interested me very much—a poem called *The Epic of Hades*. Many of you may never have heard of it; most of you may not have seen it. It is, as I view it, another gem added to the wealth of the poetry of our language. In that poem the author says—

‘For knowledge is a steep which few may climb,
While duty is a path which all may tread.’

I think it will be admitted by those who know anything of the life of Mr. Cobden that he trod what he believed to be the path of duty, and trod it with a firm and unflinching footstep; and when I look upon this statue which is now before us, so like him, and so spotless, as was his name and character, I will say that I trust his following of the path of duty will have many imitators in this district; and that from this stainless marble, and from those voiceless lips, there may be taught a perpetual lesson to many generations of the intelligent and industrious men of this district of our country. But let me add, that this which you have erected to-day, or which is erected in your midst, is by no means the greatest monument that has been built up to him. There is one far grander, and of wider significance. There is not a homestead in the country in which there is not added comfort from his labours—not a cottage the dwellers in which have not steadier employment, higher wages, and a more solid independence. This is his enduring monument. He worked for these ends, and for these great purposes, and he worked even almost to the very day when the lamp of life went out. He is gone; but his character, his deeds, his life, his example, remain a possession to us his countrymen. And let this be said of him for generations to come, as long as the great men of England are spoken of in the English language; let it be said of him that Richard Cobden gave the labours of a life that he might confer upon his countrymen perfect freedom of industry, and with it, not that blessing only, but its attendant blessings of plenty and of peace.”

“Nothing that has been written on the life and career of Mr. Richard Cobden, whose place in society stands so conspicuously vacant,” commented one writer, “nothing that has been said of his labours, whose fruits, rich and golden as the autumn cluster of the southern vine, meet the eye in every homestead in the land—no panegyric that has been pronounced on services which exhorted public homage, and even silenced public envy—no tribute that has been tendered to his memory by friendship, by gratitude, or by sorrow, is half so eloquent or half so instructive as the simple record furnished by the Probate Court, that his personalty was sworn under £8,000. It is the key to the man’s whole life, to the motives by which he was actuated, to the objects he had in view, to the difficulties which beset him, to the circumstances in which he struggled, and above all to the heroic purposes for which he endured the steady torture of prolonged labour, and the sudden martyrdom of its final termination. To have lived as Cobden lived—with influence at his disposal, power within his grasp, the boundless wealth of a nation at his feet, and to have turned his back upon them, and used his position solely for the good of his country and his race—was in itself a great and rare glory.”

Mr. Cobden despised foppery, plush, and liveries, and did not

care for great public dinners. Mr. Bright, in the House of Commons, in speaking of a court dress necessary in attending the Speaker's dinners and levées, and in contending that the custom should be abolished, said :—

“I will state a case in point. Last year the House lost—and I lost more than any other member of the House—one of its members, a dear and lamented friend of mine, whose absence I greatly deplore, and without whose presence I feel almost alone. For twenty-four years he was a member of this House—from 1831 to 1865—and during the whole of that time he felt himself restrained from accepting official invitations, either from Lord Eversley, when he was Speaker, or the right hon. gentleman who subsequently occupied the chair. Now, Mr. Cobden was not a man of striking eccentricities. . . . Posterity will say that he was one of the most eminent men that ever adorned the Parliament of this country. But for twenty-four years so strongly did he feel on this subject, that he was restrained from dining with the Speaker, or attending his official evening parties or levées.”

So high did Mr. Cobden stand in the esteem of the Legislative Assembly of Australia that his name was given to one of the new divisions of the colony. The Province of Cobden comprises the southern-coast district from Goulburn to the border of Victoria.

In all of Mr. Cobden's controversies he slandered no one, although some of his opponents were guilty of the offence; but long before his death the harsh charges that had been preferred against him had been annihilated by his pure and successful life. He was of a highly sensitive nature, which made him careful of other men's reputation as of his own, and the more his character is scrutinised the more illustrious it appears.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Mr. T. B. Potter elected to fill the vacant seat at Rochdale—The General Election of 1865—Death of Lord Palmerston—The State of Ireland—Parliamentary Reform—Outbreak of Fenianism in Ireland—Mr. Gladstone's Reform Bill introduced—It is thrown out—The Derby Cabinet—Mr. Bright lays the Foundation Stone of the Rochdale Town Hall—Reform Demonstrations.

THERE was a desire in the first place to offer the vacant seat created by the death of Mr. Cobden to Mr. Bright, but he could not possibly accept it with due regard to the unquestionable claims of his Birmingham constituents. The Liberal electors at last selected Mr. T. B. Potter, of Manchester, a personal friend of Mr. Cobden's, as their candidate. The Conservatives brought forward an eminent Queen's Counsel, Mr. W. Baliol Brett. Mr. Bright consented to be present at a meeting of the electors, which was held on the evening of the 10th of April, 1865, in the extensive warehouse of Messrs. Kelsall and Kemp, in Baillie Street, and he said:—

“You will believe me when I say I have had the greatest difficulty in consenting to come forward before you to-night on this sad occasion. (Hear, hear.) I have suffered so much during the past week, that perhaps no place can be more un congenial to my feelings than the platform of a public meeting; but whilst we sorrow for the departed we are not permitted to abandon the duties which lie upon us as citizens of our country, and therefore, in the hope that as one of the electors of this borough I may be able to add my counsel to the general counsel, with a view to promote a wise result, I have ventured to come here to-night, to join you in the course which may be taken with regard to the future representation of this borough. (Hear, hear.) . . . Mr. Ashworth, who moved the resolution, has referred to the character of the late Sir Thomas Potter. There are many here who did not know him. I knew him intimately, and I believe there was not in this country a man more entirely devoted to what was just, and wise, and liberal in the legislation and government of this country. I have never known a man who was more ready to expend his money, and to give his time and labour for great public objects, more willingly than he was during his life. (Cheers.) I know one man who bids fair to approach him, and that is his son, who is proposed to be your representative. (Loud cheers.) . . . It is not the time, and probably the time will never come, when it would become me to advert to a hundred acts of kindness which Mr. Potter has wished to perform, and many of which he has performed to your late eminent representative. (Cheers.) If I can speak for him who is here no longer—and I know no one amongst his friends who has a better right to speak—(hear, hear)—I should say in the position in which this borough is now placed you would be doing only that which would be welcome to him, if you give the confidence and support which you offered to him to the gentleman who is now proposed to you as a candidate for your suffrages.” (Loud cheers.)

The election took place on the 15th of April, and resulted in the return of Mr. Potter by a majority of 150; 646 votes were tendered in favour of Mr. T. B. Potter, and 496 for Mr. Brett.

Some time after, Mr. Brett was made a judge, and is now Master of the Rolls.

Parliament was dissolved on the 6th of July, 1865, and Mr. Bright, in his address to the electors of Birmingham, stated :—

“I fear the career of the House which is now about to separate is one which has given you much disappointment. The election of 1859 was caused by the question of suffrage extension, and was intended to promote an advance, if not a settlement, of that question. The House which was returned at that election has been disloyal to its pledges, and has neglected its first duty; the Administration, which in 1859 climbed into office under the pretence of its devotion to the question of Parliamentary Reform, has violated its solemn pledges. Its chiefs have purposely betrayed the cause they undertook to defend, and its less eminent members have tamely acquiesced in that betrayal. The Ministers have for six years held office, which, but for promises they made, and which they have broken, they could not have obtained possession of even for a single day.”

Mr. Bright, with his colleagues, were returned to Parliament unopposed, and in returning thanks to the electors, during a long speech he remarked, in speaking on Reform :—

“Now, Mr. Disraeli is a man who does what may be called the conjuring for his party. (Laughter.) He is what, amongst a tribe of Red Indians, would be called “the mystery man.” (Renewed laughter.) He invents phrases for them—and one of the phrases, the last and the newest, is this lateral extension of the franchise. Now, Mr. Disraeli is a man of brains, of genius, of great capacity for action, of a wonderful tenacity of purpose, and of a rare courage. He would have been a statesman if his powers had been directed by any noble principle or idea. (Laughter and applause.) But, unhappily, he prefers a temporary and worthless distinction as the head of a decaying party, fighting for impossible ends, to the priceless memories of services rendered to his country—(cheers)—and to freedom, on which only in our age an enduring fame can be built up. (Loud cheers.) Now, what is meant by lateral extension? It means this: that all below £10 householders are not to be admitted. Well, the present law admits all that are above £10 householders, and therefore it can only include those not now included, a few men, inconsiderable in the whole number, who are lodgers, or who are brothers or sons of housekeepers whose names are already on the register; and therefore it is quite clear that this is a miserable pretence and a delusion, and an insult of the most glaring kind to the great body of the people. (Loud cheers.) . . . I believe the time is coming, nay, that we are upon its very threshold—when a large number of those hitherto excluded will be admitted, and we shall feel more than ever before that we are one nation and one people. Many of you have stood, as I have often stood, on the sea-shore, in an hour of quiet and of calm. No tempest drives the waves; the wind is but a whisper; and yet the tide comes on as by some latent and mysterious power. The loiterers on the beach are driven from point to point as the waves advance, and at length the whole vast basin of the ocean seems filled to the brim. So on this question: there is no violence nor even menace of force; but opinion grows, its tide moves on; opposition, ignorant on the one hand, insolent on the other, falls back; and shortly we shall see barriers thrown down, privilege and monopoly swept away, a people enfranchised, and the measure of their freedom full. You have honoured me this morning by committing this great cause in part to my keeping. I may defend it feebly, I may fall from the ranks before it is won, but of one thing you may be sure, I shall never betray it.”

The result of the general election was that the Liberals gained fifty-nine new seats, and the Conservatives thirty-three, which relieved the Government of the dread of a Tory descent upon the Ministerial benches, which hitherto operated like an incubus on the spirits of those who wished to assert the independence of Liberalism.

Lord Palmerston was not destined to hold the reins of Government much longer, for while riding in an open carriage at Brocket Hall, without an overcoat, he caught a severe cold on the 11th of October, and died on the 19th of the same month.

"Fate steals along with silent tread,
Found oftenest in what least we dread;
Frowns in the storm with angry brow,
But in the sunshine strikes the blow."

The noble lord, however, had reached the ripe age of eighty-one. He had held office under the Crown altogether for forty-eight years, and had been a member of fourteen Administrations. He was a descendant of a family that traced its lineage to a Saxon earl, and had for ancestors some of the most distinguished statesmen of the past generation. He was educated at a public school and two universities. Although he had held office for nearly half a century, he had not originated one measure of importance with which his name will be associated. His country's welfare, he had been of opinion, was best achieved by preserving her institutions unchanged, and that her honour was best sustained by making her opinions felt in every part of the world. He was "a terrible man with a terrible name," and the Russians, it was said, used to terrify into silence their children by pronouncing his name. Before he died, however, he yielded to the doctrine of non-intervention. By the express commands of the Queen he was honoured with a public funeral, and was sepulchred at Westminster Abbey. We may justly lament that the ability he possessed should have been devoted to squandering his country's treasure in a fruitless foreign policy, and in defences against an imaginary foe, and from his tomb we can draw no other moral than of defeated hopes, wasted ability, and worn-out fame.

The Ministry was reconstructed, and Earl Russell filled the vacant place of Premier, and Mr. W. E. Gladstone became leader in the House of Commons, occupying the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Bright again addressed a public meeting of the inhabitants of Birmingham, in the Town Hall of that town, on the 13th of December, 1865. Mr. Yates, the Mayor, presided.

"I recollect reading in a book," remarked Mr. Bright, "I believe published under the authority and by the approval of a lord chancellor of Ireland, that there had been 200 Acts of Parliament passed in favour of the landlord, and not one that he could point to in favour of the tenant. (Cries of 'Shame.') Look at their Church—I am always sorry to have to say things which appear injurious to the character of a Church. The Church religious is one thing, the Church political is another. (Cheers.) Don't let any labouring, earnest, Protestant clergyman in Ireland think that I am undervaluing whatever services he may render to religion.

I speak of the Church as a political institution, set down in that country not by the opinion of the people but by the power of the Tory party in England, and I say that so long as that Church exists there never will be, there never can be—in the nature of the human mind there never ought to be—content and tranquillity in Ireland. (Cheers.) And this is not all we suffer. Look at America in connection with this question. How many Irishmen have emigrated to America?

‘Myriads are gathered there whom rage or fear
Drive from their wasted homes.’

And in America they form a portion of the people perpetually hostile to England. The Scotch are a people no more disposed to put up with insult and wrong than the Irish, but the Scotch who emigrate, whether to Canada or the United States, are not there the enemies of this country. They speak of England, of Scotland, of Britain, of the United Kingdom, with respect and affection; and if the Irish had been treated as the Scotch have been treated, the whole of the Irish nation on the American continent, instead of being hostile, bitterly and unchangeably hostile, to England, would have been much smaller in its numbers, and would have been just as friendly to us as the emigrants from Scotland are. (Cheers.) Let me now put to you, before I sit down, a single proposition, and through these gentlemen who sit below me, to whom freedom in this country is so greatly and so constantly indebted—(applause)—let me put it to the people of this kingdom—if of the five millions who are now shut out one million were admitted—and you will mark the extreme, some will say blameable, moderation of that suggestion—if only one million were admitted, would not the cry of the toil-laden and the suffering which even now ascends to Heaven, would it not, think you, reach further—be heard even on the floor of Parliament? For do not forget that the ear of the Supreme is nearer even to the lowliest of us than is that of our earthly rulers. (Cheers.) But if that voice was heard in Parliament, would it not, perchance, do something to still the roar of faction, and to bend the powers of statesmanship to the high and holy purposes of humanity and justice? I speak not the language of party; I feel myself above the level of party. (Great and continued cheering.) I speak, as I have endeavoured to speak, on behalf of the unenfranchised, the almost voiceless millions of my countrymen. Their claim is just, and it is constitutional. It will be heard; it cannot be rejected. (Cheers.) To the outward eye monarchs and parliaments seem to rule with absolute and unquestionable sway; but—and I quote the words which one of our old Puritan poets has left for us—

‘There is on earth a yet auguster thing,
Veil’d though it be, than Parliament or King.’

That auguster thing is the tribunal which God has set up in the consciences of men. It is before that tribunal that I am now permitted humbly to plead, and there is something in my heart—a small but an exultant voice—which tells me I shall not plead in vain.” (Great cheers, the audience rising and continuing the demonstration for some time.)

A Reform meeting, which had been called by the Mayor of Rochdale, in compliance with a requisition, was held on the 3rd of January, 1866, in Mr. Pickuls’s wooden theatre, which at that time was situated in Newgate, Rochdale. Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech, in the course of which he said:—

“I was glad when I heard it was intended to hold this meeting, but now when I stand before this audience I feel myself filled with sadness which I cannot easily describe. I remember some of your former meetings, one great meeting held two years ago, and another still greater which was held last year, at which I was not able to be present: but I remember that great and most noble speech which many of you were privileged to hear. The lips whose words then charmed and instructed you are now closed for ever, but there remains to us one thing, a priceless legacy, the example of a great and noble life, devoted to justice—I say, devoted to justice—and whose labours have added whole realms to the ever-widening empire of human freedom. (Applause.) In the midst of our unavailing regrets let us thank God that such a life has been lived amongst us. (Hear, hear.) I cannot believe that

that party which calls itself the Conservative party will make this question of Jamaica a battle-ground in the ensuing session. Mr. Disraeli is a man who is a head and shoulders taller than all those who sit about him or who follow him, in all intellect and statesmanship. (Hear, hear.) And I do not believe, and will not believe until I see it, that Mr. Disraeli will ever permit the shocking atrocities committed in Jamaica to be, in any way of a defence of them, associated with his public character and career. (Hear, hear.) Besides, suppose, which I should think highly probable, that Mrs. Gordon were to retire from an island so sad to her henceforth and come to England; suppose she came to the bar of the House of Commons and asked for justice, is there any man in that House who dare get up and deny that justice to that woman? Or if she should make her way as a suppliant to the steps of the throne, think you that the widow of the murdered Gordon will ask in vain for justice at the hands of England's widowed Queen? (Cheers.) . . . But two things are possible—I am not certain that they are not clear. The one is, that if this question of Reform is treated with a feeble hand the Government will fall; and the other is, that if this Government falls, presided over by the most eminent statesman now living of the Whig party, I think we are likely to see the entire extinction of the Whigs as a governing party in the affairs of this country. (Hear, hear.) But whether the Whigs, whether this Government, are equal to the time or not, the cause which we espouse, and which I am endeavouring to defend, is nevertheless quite safe; it has within it an indestructible life. Feebleness or treachery may retard it for a time, but cannot prevent its final and its early triumph. (Cheers.) There is an old poem that I have read with great pleasure, but many years ago, the 'Fairie Queene,' a line of which I think may teach us something in our present position—

'No fort so fensible, no wall so strong,
But the continual battery may rive.'

I feel certain that the part of selfishness and monopoly cannot be held for ever, and that the walls of privilege cannot through all time resist the multitudes that are gathering to the assault. (Hear, hear.) In all the nations of the world at this day, I believe, the powers of good are gaining steadily on the powers of evil. (Hear, hear.) I think it is eminently and happily so in this country. Let us take courage then. We are endeavouring by constitutional means to pass a great constitutional end, to make the Parliament not only the organ of the will, but the honest and faithful guardian of the interests of all the classes of this country. (Hear, hear.) It is a great and noble purpose which we have set ourselves to do, and it is a purpose which cannot fail if we are true to it and ourselves." (Great cheering.)

The discontent in Ireland, resulting from years of misrule, brought into being a brotherhood that assumed the name of "Fenians." The civil war in America having terminated, multitudes of Irishmen who had enlisted in the American armies, finding their "occupation gone," and preferring a life of adventure and agitation to the obscurity of monotonous labour, became avowed Fenians. Having been liberally supplied with funds, they returned to Ireland and sowed the seed of disaffection. The safety of Ireland becoming serious, it was deemed wise that the Habeas Corpus Act should be suspended, and accordingly, on the 17th February, 1866, Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary, moved in the House of Commons for leave to bring in a Bill to effect that object. Mr. Bright delivered a speech on the subject. He said:—

"Sixty years ago this House undertook to govern Ireland. I will say nothing of the circumstances under which the union of the two countries took place, save that they were disgraceful and corrupt to the last degree. I will say nothing of the manner in which the promises made to the Irish people were broken. During the sixty years that have elapsed since the union, three considerable measures,

calculated to improve the condition of the Irish people, have passed through the House. The first of these was the measure passed in 1829, for the emancipation of the Catholics of Ireland, an Act the justness of which no one now questions. Well, the First Minister of the Crown, himself a great soldier, stated that that measure was passed in the face of, and only because of, the danger of civil war. The other two measures to which I refer are the Bill for the relief of the poor, and the Bill for the sale of encumbered estates; and these two measures were introduced into this House, and passed this House, on the emergency of a famine, more severe, I believe, than any that has desolated any Christian country of the world within the last 400 years. Except on these emergencies—I appeal to every Irish member and to every English member who has ever paid any attention to these matters—except in these emergencies Parliament has done nothing for the people of Ireland. (Hear, hear.)

. . . But suppose it were possible for these men, with their intellects, with their far-reaching vision, to examine this question thoroughly, and to say for once, whether this leads to office and to the miserable notoriety that men call fame which springs from office, or not, 'If it be possible, we will act with loyalty to the Sovereign and justice to the people; and if it be possible, we will make Ireland a strength, and not a weakness, to the British Empire.' It is from this fighting with party and for party, and for the gains which party gives, that there is so little result from the great intellect of such men as these. Like the captive Samson of old—

‘They grind in brazen fetters, under task,
With their Heaven-gifted strength’—

and the country and the world gain little by those faculties which God has given them for the blessing of the country and the world.” (Cheers.)

The Bill passed, and on the same evening received the Royal assent.

Sir George Grey in February introduced a Bill for suppressing the cattle plague, for the ravages by this disease had become alarming. Mr. Bright agreed in the absolute necessity, so far as farms were concerned, of enforcing a rigid isolation; but he differed from the proposal in the Bill which left the power of widespread and indiscriminate slaughter to the local authorities. With compensation, he believed that the slaughter would be unnecessary and monstrous in amount. It was contrary to the principle adopted by Parliament on past occasions of public suffering to vote money out of taxes to remedy a misfortune of this kind; and it was a grievance which every taxpayer would complain of, if his money were applied to the compensation of well-to-do farmers and rich landowners who might suffer from the affliction. The Bill, after some objectionable clauses were expunged, and throwing the whole charge on the county and borough rate, passed, and soon received the Royal assent.

Mr. Gladstone, on behalf of the Government, on the 12th of March, brought in a Reform Bill, in which it was proposed to reduce the county franchise from £50 to £14, but occupation of property of a value less than £50 was to include a house as well as land, and the annual value of the house was not to be less than £7. The franchise was to be extended to compound householders in boroughs, to tenants of separate parts of

a house, and to lodgers paying £10 a year. In boroughs the qualification was to be lowered from £10 to £7. The Bill, it was calculated, would add 400,000 persons to the list of voters. Mr. Bright approved of the Bill in the main, and gave it his support because, he said, as far as it went it was a simple and honest measure. In this speech Mr. Bright exhibited his great facility in stinging, sticking designations, at the expense of Messrs. Lowe and Horsman, who opposed the Bill, and who had, it was said, become disaffected on account of being left out in the cold without office:—

“If I may parody, or if I may make an alteration in a line or two of one of the most beautiful poems in our language,” said Mr. Bright, “I might ask—

‘For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
That pleasing, anxious office e’er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the Treasury,
Nor cast one last, long, lingering look behind.’

(Laughter.) What I complain of is this—that when place recedes into the somewhat dim past, that which in office was deemed patriotism vanishes with it; and we have one howl of despair from these right hon. gentlemen because it is proposed to diminish the franchise in boroughs from £10 to £7, and to add by so small a proportion as that something to the freedom of the people of this country The right hon. gentleman below me (Mr. Horsman) said a little against the Government and a little against the Bill, but had last night a field-night for an attack upon so humble an individual as myself. The right hon. gentleman is the first of the new party who has expressed his great grief, who has retired into what may be called his political Cave of Adullam, and he has called about him every one that was in distress, and every one that was discontented. The right hon. gentleman has been anxious to form a party in this House. There is scarcely any one on this side of the House who is able to address the House with effect, or to take much part in our debates, whom he has not tried to bring over to his party or cabal; and at last the right hon. gentleman has succeeded in hooking the right hon. gentleman the member for Calne. (Laughter.) I know there was an opinion expressed many years ago by a member of the Treasury Bench and of the Cabinet, that two men would make a party. When a party is formed of two men so amiable, so discreet, as the two right hon. gentlemen, we may hope to see for the first time in Parliament a party perfectly harmonious, and distinguished by mutual and unbroken trust. (Cheers and laughter.) But there is one difficulty which it is impossible to remove. This party of two reminds me of the Scotch terrier, which was so covered with hair, that you could not tell which was the head and which was the tail of it.” (Great laughter.)

Mr. Bright opened the adjourned debate on the subject of Reform on the 23rd of April, in a very long speech, in which, replying to Sir E. B. Lytton, he said:—

“The right hon. baronet once held very different opinions from these. Many years ago he published a book called ‘England and the English.’ This is not a very profound but a very amusing book, and I should like to read to the House a sentence which the right hon. gentleman put as a motto to the book, which motto, I think, he took from Ben Jonson. The words are—

‘I am he,
Have measured all the shires of England over,
For to these savages I was addicted
To search their nature and make odd discoveries.’

The discovery which he had made up to 1860 was this: if you introduce artisans and working-men between a £10 and £6 rental, you give the lion’s share of the power of the representation to the poverty and passion of the country. In his speech last

week he did not treat the working-men as if they were made up of poverty and passion, but he used generous words of them, and he told us how there was a tie, not only of interest, but of respect and affection, between the rich and the labouring poor; and doubtless this language far more accurately stated his real opinion than when he said that between £6 and £10 the working-men were represented by 'poverty and passion.' But to give them compliments of this kind, and not votes, seems to me to be a thing which will not be well received by the great body of the people, who are asking that at least some of them may be admitted to a representation in this House. It reminds me very much of that couplet, which I am sure the right hon. gentleman will remember, from Shenstone—

'He kicked them downstairs with such a sweet grace,
They may think he was handing them up.'

(Laughter.) How is it to be conceived that, after a speech full of such noble and generous sympathy, the right hon. gentleman concludes to throw all the weight of his character and influence into the side of a party which says little that is kind and generous of this class? (Loud opposition cries of 'No, no.') I will say, then, of a party which sometimes does say something generous of the working-class, but never shows the slightest disposition to confer upon it any portion of political rights. (Cheers.) I have been misrepresented, and condemned, and denounced by hon. gentlemen opposite, and by not a few writers in their press. My conscience tells me that I have laboured honestly only to destroy that which is evil, and to build up that which is good. The political gains of the last twenty-five years, as they were summed up the other night by the hon. member for Wick (Mr. Laing), are my political gains, if they can be called the gains in any degree of any living Englishman. (Cheers.) And if now, in all the great centres of our population—in Birmingham with its busy district—in Manchester with its encircling towns—in the population of the West Riding of Yorkshire—in Glasgow and amidst the vast industries of the west of Scotland—and in this great Babylon in which we are assembled—if we do not find ourselves surrounded by hungry and exasperated multitudes—if now, more than at any time during the last hundred years, it may be said, quoting the beautiful words of Mr. Sheridan, that—

'Content sits basking on the cheek of toil'—

if this House, and if its statesmen, glory in the change, have I not as much as any living man some claim to partake of that glory? I know, and every thoughtful man among you knows, and those gentlemen who sit on that bench and who are leading you to this enterprise, know that the policy I have urged upon the House and upon the country, so far as it has hitherto been accepted by Parliament, is a policy conservative of the public welfare, strengthening the just authority of Parliament, and adding from day to day fresh lustre and dignity to the Crown. And now, when I speak to you and ask you to pass this Bill—when I plead on behalf of those who are not allowed to speak themselves in this House—if you could raise yourself for this night, for this hour, above the region of party strife—if you could free yourselves from the pestilent atmosphere of passion and prejudice which so often surrounds us here, I feel confident that at this moment I should not plead in vain before this Imperial Parliament on behalf of the English constitution and the English people." (Cheers.)

On the 27th of April, on the second reading of the Bill, it was found that the majority numbered only five. The Government took the vote to mean that the House wished the Reform Bill to go on, and also that it should be made to include the redistribution of seats. Accordingly, a Bill for this purpose was introduced in May, the main features of which were the obtaining forty-nine vacant seats by grouping small boroughs and taking away their second members, and the allotment of these seats—seven to Scotland, twenty-six to English counties, and the rest to English boroughs. On Lord Dunkellin's motion, substituting a rating for a rental franchise in the boroughs, the Government

were left in a minority of eleven, and instantly resigned. Lord Derby next formed a Cabinet. Mr. Disraeli was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Chelmsford, Lord Chancellor; Duke of Buckingham, Lord President of the Council; Earl of Malmesbury, Lord Privy Seal; Mr. Walpole, Home Secretary; Lord Stanley, Foreign Secretary; Earl of Carnarvon, Colonial Secretary; General Peel, War Secretary; Viscount Cranbourne, Indian Secretary; Sir S. Northcote, President of the Board of Trade; Earl of Devon, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; Duke of Montrose, Postmaster-General; Sir J. Pakington, First Lord of the Admiralty; Marquis of Abercorn, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; and Lord Naas, Secretary for Ireland.

Mr. Bright laid the foundation-stone of the Rochdale Town Hall in the presence of an immense number of his townsmen on the 31st of March. Mr. Bright's speech was lengthy, and in alluding to the Liberal members who had represented Rochdale in Parliament, he said:—

"If I look at the members who have sat for this borough, taking the whole time from the period of our enfranchisement, now thirty-four years ago, I think we may hold up our heads alongside any constituency in the kingdom. (Hear, hear.) Whether I take Mr. Fenton, who was our first member—(hear, hear)—a neighbour in high esteem, faithful always to his convictions, and retaining, as long as he chose to sit, the confidence of the constituency; or coming down from him to Mr. Sharman Crawford, who came to this town, I will hardly say as a candidate, because he was not a candidate of his own offering, but came to be elected at the time when I believe there was not a single person in this town but myself who had not voted for his candidature when he was first proposed, though, of course, I voted for him at the election. Well, after him came Mr. Miall, a gentleman who has made himself a great position—(hear, hear)—and a name in connection with great principles, for which, it may be, this country is not yet prepared, but which principles will live long after all those who now deride and oppose them are forgotten. (Cheers.) Well, after him we elected another man, and I fear to speak now of a man who this time twelve months was yet living, but the anniversary of whose death will be only to-morrow. You see here in marble (pointing to the bust of the late Mr. Cobden, which was placed in the room) the representation of his outward form, so good I think as you will rarely see of any man who has passed from among us, but marble itself is but of transient duration compared with the permanency of that fame which his services to this country confer upon his name. (Loud cheers.) We have selected another since then. I will not speak of the present member of this borough (Mr. T. B. Potter). He said of the Parliament that it was a new Parliament, and had not been very long tried; therefore I might say the same of him, but I have no doubt that when the time shall come that his connection with this borough shall cease, and I wish it to be remote—(applause)—that we shall be able to add him to the list of our representatives who have done credit to the choice of the constituency, and who, by their consistency in the support of all just principles of public freedom, have done something to aid the advancing interests and liberties of their country." (Cheers.)

A "Reform Demonstration" was held in Birmingham, on the 27th of August, which was the first of a series held in England, Scotland, and Ireland. Mr. Bright was invited to all of these demonstrations. At Birmingham several thousand

persons walked in procession, headed by a number of carriages, in the first of which were Mr. John Bright and Mr. Schofield, M.P. No fewer than six platforms were erected in Brooke's Field, and about 150,000 men were present. Resolutions in favour of Reform were passed. In the evening a meeting was held in the Town Hall; the Mayor presided. About 6,000 persons managed to get accommodation in this large hall. Mr. Bright, in the course of his speech, in referring to the Reform Bill introduced by the Liberal Government, said :—

"Now that Bill, so moderate that I confess I had entertained the hope that it would pass through Parliament without any great difficulty, was resisted as if it had been charged with all the dangerous matter which the Tory party attributed to it. It was intrigued against in a manner—I had almost said more base, but I will say more hateful, than any measure I have seen opposed during the twenty-three years that I have sat in the House of Commons; and finally, under every kind of false pretence, it was rejected by a small majority, and fell, and with it the Government which had proposed it also fell. . . . The Government of Lord Derby in the House of Commons, sitting all in a row, reminds me very much of a number of amusing and ingenious gentlemen whom I dare say some of you have seen and listened to. I mean the Christy Minstrels. The Christy Minstrels, if I am not misinformed, are, when they are clean-washed, white men; but they come before the audience as black as the blackest negroes, and by this transformation it is expected that their jokes and songs will be more amusing. The Derby minstrels pretend to be Liberal and white; but the fact is, if you come nearer and examine them closely, you will find them to be just as black and curly as the Tories have ever been. I do not know, and I will not pretend to say, which of them it is that plays the banjo and which the bones. But I have no doubt that, in their manoeuvres to keep in office during the coming session, we shall know something more about them than we do at present. They are, in point of fact, when they pretend to be Liberal, mere usurpers and impostors. . . . The address which has been presented to me has referred to 1832. I remember that time well. My young heart then was stirred with the trumpet-blast that sounded from your midst. There was no part of this kingdom where your voice was not heard. Let it sound again. (Cheers.) Stretch out your hands to your countrymen in every part of the three kingdoms, and ask them to join you in a great and righteous effort on behalf of that freedom which has been so long the boast of Englishmen, but which the majority of Englishmen have never yet possessed. I shall esteem it an honour which my words cannot describe, and which even in thought I cannot measure, if the population which I am permitted to represent should do its full duty in the great struggle which is before us. Remember the great object for which we strive. Care not for calumnies and lies. Our object is this—to restore the British Constitution in all its fulness, with all its freedom, to the British people." (Cheers.)

A demonstration was next held in favour of Reform at Manchester on the 24th of September. An open-air meeting was held in Campfield, Knott Mill, and thousands of working men from the surrounding towns showed their zeal by going to Manchester, although it was pouring rain. The procession numbered about 12,000 persons, and about 80,000 persons listened to the speeches that were delivered. In the evening a meeting was held in the Free-trade Hall, which was not sufficiently large to accommodate the vast number that thronged to seek admission. When Mr. Bright appeared on the platform the entire mass saluted him with cheers and waving of hats and handkerchiefs, and the

band played "Auld Lang Syne." Instantly the appropriateness of this chorus to the renewal of intercourse between Mr. Bright and his former constituents was perceived; the entire audience joined in the chorus, and repeated it again and again. The chair was taken by Mr. T. B. Potter, M.P. Mr. George Wilson, in moving the adoption of an address to Mr. Bright, said that for the last twenty years Mr. Bright had had the question of Reform entirely in his hands. No man had worked harder or made greater sacrifices, and although he might not acquire a fortune, although he might not succeed in establishing a family, yet he would leave a name behind him, an inheritance to his children, which all the wealth in England could not buy. Mr. Hooson seconded the adoption of the address, which was supported by Mr. E. Beales and Mr. Benjamin Armitage, and adopted amid deafening cheers. Mr. Bright's speech ranged over two columns and a half of the newspapers. He remarked:—

"And now, as my eye has rested upon this wonderful assembly, I have thought it not wrong to ask myself whether there is any question that is great, that is sufficient, that is noble, that has called us together to-night, and I have come to the conclusion that great as is this meeting, and transcendently great the meeting which was held in the middle of the day, that the question which has brought us together is worthy of our assembling and worthy of every effort we may make. (Hear, hear.) We are met for the purpose, so far as lies in our power, of widening the boundaries and making more stable the foundations of the freedom of the country in which we live. (Hear, hear.) We are not, as our forefathers were two hundred years ago, called upon to do battle with the crown; we have no dynasty to complain of, nor royal family to dispossess. In our day the wearer of the crown of England is in favour of freedom. (Cheers.) On many separate occasions, as you all know, the Queen has strongly—as strongly as became her station—urged upon Parliament the extension of the franchise to the people. (Hear, hear.) Parliament has been less liberal than the crown—(hear, hear)—and time after time those recommendations have been disregarded, and the offers of the monarch have been rejected and denied." (Cries of "Shame.")

Leeds followed Manchester with a demonstration, on the 8th of October, in favour of Reform. The day was observed more or less as a general holiday. The procession took an hour to pass a given point, and the streets were crowded with spectators. A meeting was held on Woodhouse Moor, and about 150,000 persons were present. Resolutions were passed at five different platforms in favour of Reform, and acknowledging the services of Messrs. Gladstone, Bright, and Mill. In the evening there was an immense meeting in the Victoria Hall, at which Mr. Bright was presented with an address. In responding, he delivered a lengthy speech, remarking that—

"The Tories were half repenting the course they took during the previous session, and when he stated that Lord Derby was not a Reformer he was charged with railing at Lord Derby; and it was said that it was positively a case of shocking injustice to charge the Tories with being hostile to Reform. (Laughter.) Well, his memory might not be as correct as that of some people, but he recollected that during the last

session the 280 gentlemen who called themselves Tories in the House of Commons objected to Mr. Gladstone's Bill because it proposed to admit, according to Mr. Gladstone's estimate, 204,000 working-men of the unenfranchised five million to the suffrage." (Hear, hear, and cheers.)

The agitation was next extended to Glasgow, and on the 16th of October there was a procession to the place of meeting which extended five miles, and numbered 20,000 to 30,000 persons. On the ground during the proceedings it was calculated that 130,000 individuals were present. In the evening a meeting was held in the City Hall, which was crowded by an enthusiastic audience. Mr. Robert Dalglish presided. Mr. Bright, in responding, said:—

"A friend of mine—a member of the House of Commons, who lives within six miles of the Royal town and Castle of Windsor, told me only the other day that he knew the case of a family near his house in which there had grown up eleven children, not one of whom could read or write in the least degree. And he said that he had lately had in his employ upon his property seven men, of whom four could neither read nor write, two of them could read most imperfectly, and one of them could read and write about as well as the other two could read. Bear in mind that all this exists within six miles of the Royal Castle of Windsor. It exists in a neighbourhood where lords and squires and established clergymen swarm. Such is the state of ignorance of that population at this moment. In the county from which I come, girls of the age of from fifteen to twenty years are earning, many of them, I believe, double the weekly wages of the able-bodied farm labourer, the head and father of a family, in some of the south-western counties of England. But what must be the ignorance of that population with such wages offering to them in Lancashire and Yorkshire that they scarcely hear of them. They seem to have no aspiration to better their condition, and there is no sensible emigration from these wretched counties to the more prosperous counties of the north. Your address refers to pauperism—the gulf of pauperism. In the United Kingdom at this moment there are more than 1,200,000 paupers. The pauperism of the United Kingdom last year—and it will not cost less, I believe, this year—cost the ratepayers—those who pay taxes for the relief of the poor—more than seven and a half millions sterling, and this does not include many thousands of vagrants who also come occasionally under the name of paupers. . . . Now, if the Clerk of the House of Commons were placed at Temple Bar, and if he had orders to tap upon the shoulder every well-dressed and apparently clean-washed man who passed through that ancient bar, until he had numbered six hundred and fifty-eight; and if the Crown summoned these six hundred and fifty-eight to be the Parliament of the United Kingdom, my honest conviction is that you would have a better Parliament than now exists. This assertion will stagger some timid and some good men; but let me explain myself to you. It would be a Parliament, every member of which would have no direct constituency, but it would be a Parliament that would act as a jury that would take some heed of the facts and arguments laid before it. It would be free, at any rate, from the class prejudices which weigh upon the present House of Commons. It would be free from the overshadowing presence of what are called noble families. It would owe no allegiance to great landowners, and I hope it would have fewer men amongst it seeking their own gains by entering Parliament. . . . I believe now there is nothing which would tend so much to sweeten the breath of British society as the admission of a large and generous number of the working-classes to citizenship and the exercise of the franchise. (Cheers.) Now, if my words should reach the ears and reach the heart of any man who is interested in the advancement of religion in this country, I ask him to consider whether there are not great political obstacles to the extension of civilisation and morality and religion within the bounds of the United Kingdom. (Cheers.) We believe—these ministers, you, and I—we believe in a Supreme Ruler of the Universe. We believe in His omnipotence; we believe and we humbly trust in His mercy. We

know that the strongest argument which is used against that belief, by those who reject it, is an argument drawn from the misery, and the helplessness, and the darkness of so many of our race, even in countries which call themselves civilised and Christian. Is not that the fact? If I believed that this misery, and this helplessness, and this darkness, could not be touched or transformed, I myself should be driven to admit the almost overwhelming force of that argument; but I am convinced that just laws, and an enlightened administration of them, would change the face of the country."

A banquet was given by the Irish Liberals to Mr. Bright, in the Rotunda, Dublin, on the 30th of October. There was a very large attendance of the leading Liberals of Ireland, and the galleries were filled with a brilliant attendance of ladies. The invitation was signed by upwards of twenty members of Parliament, and by a large number of gentlemen of position; in fact, the member for Birmingham seemed to be a great favourite, and every reliance placed on what he stated. The chair was occupied by The O'Donoghue, M.P., who said they were there that night as a great national assembly, representing all who loved liberty, and placed the interest of the commonwealth above the interest of party; and, in the name of Ireland, they wished John Bright, the matchless advocate of the people, and their tried and trusted friend, a thousand welcomes to the shores of Ireland.

"I think I was told in 1849," said Mr. Bright, "as I stood in the burial ground at Skibbereen, that at least 400 people who had died of famine were buried within the quarter of an acre of ground on which I was then looking. It is a country, too, from which there has been a greater emigration by sea within a given time than has been known at any time from any other country in the world. It is a country where there has been, for generations past, a general sense of wrong, out of which has grown a state of chronic insurrection; and at this very moment when I speak, the general safeguard of constitutional liberty is withdrawn, and we meet in this hall, and I speak here to-night, rather by the forbearance and permission of the Irish executive than under the protection of the common safeguards of the rights and liberties of the people of the United Kingdom. I venture to say that this is a miserable and a humiliating picture to draw of this country. Bear in mind that I am not speaking of Poland suffering under the conquest of Russia. There is a gentleman, now a candidate for an Irish county, who is very great upon the wrongs of Poland; but I have found him always in the House of Commons taking sides with that great party which has systematically supported the wrongs of Ireland. I am not speaking about Hungary, or of Venice as she was under the rule of Austria, or of the Greeks under the dominion of the Turk, but I am speaking of Ireland—part of the United Kingdom—part of that which boasts itself to be the most civilised and the most Christian nation in the world. I took the liberty recently, at a meeting in Glasgow, to say that I believed it was impossible for a class to govern a great nation wisely and justly. Now, in Ireland there has been a field in which all the principles of the Tory party have had their complete experiment and development. You have had the country gentleman in all his power. You have had any number of Acts of Parliament which the ancient Parliament of Ireland or the Parliament of the United Kingdom could give him. You have had the Established Church supported by the law, even to the extent, not many years ago, of collecting its revenues by the aid of military force. In point of fact, I believe it would be impossible to imagine a state of things in which the principles of the Tory party have had a more entire and complete opportunity for their trial than they have had within the limits of this island. And yet what has happened? This, surely. That the kingdom has been continually weakened—that the harmony of the empire has been disturbed, and that the mischief has not been confined to the United Kingdom, but has spread to the colonies. . . . I am told—you can answer it if I am wrong—that it is not common

in Ireland now to give leases to tenants, especially to Catholic tenants. If that be so, then the security for the property of the tenant rests only upon the good feeling and favour of the owner of the land, for the laws, as we know, have been made by the landowners, and many propositions for the advantage of the tenants have unfortunately been too little considered by Parliament. The result is that you have bad farming, bad dwelling-houses, bad temper, and everything bad connected with the occupation and cultivation of land in Ireland. One of the results—a result the most appalling—is this, that your population is fleeing from your country and seeking refuge in a distant land. (Cheers.) On this point I wish to refer to a letter which I received a few days ago from a most esteemed citizen of Dublin. He told me that he believed that a very large portion of what he called the poor, amongst Irishmen, sympathised with any scheme or any proposition that was adverse to the Imperial Government. (Cheers.) He said further, that the people here are rather in the country than of it, and that they are looking more to America than they are looking to England. (Cheers.) I think there is a good deal in that. When we consider how many Irishmen have found a refuge in America, I do not know how we can wonder at that statement. You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity, he prayed with his window open towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mohammed, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun—(cheers)—the aspirations of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic, and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West. If this be so, I say then that the disease is not only serious, but it is desperate; but desperate as it is, I believe there is a certain remedy for it if the people and the Parliament of the United Kingdom are willing to apply it. . . . I believe that at the root of a general discontent there is in all countries a general grievance and general suffering. (Loud cheers.) The surface of society is not incessantly disturbed without a cause. I recollect in the poem of the greatest of Italian poets, he tells us that as he saw in vision the Stygian lake, and stood upon its banks, he observed the constant commotion upon the surface of the pool, and his good instructor and guide explained to him the cause of it—

‘This, too, for certain know, that underneath
The water dwells a multitude, whose sighs
Into these bubbles make the surface heave,
As thine eye tells thee wheresoe’er it turn.’

(Cheers.) And I say in Ireland, for generations back, that the misery and the wrongs of the people have made their sign, and have found a voice in constant insurrection and disorder. (Cheers.) I have said that Ireland is a country of many wrongs and of many sorrows. Her past lies almost all in shadow. Her present is full of anxiety and peril. Her future depends on the power of her people to substitute equality and justice for supremacy, and a generous patriotism for the spirit of faction. In the effort now making in Great Britain to create a free representation of the people, you have the deepest interest. The people never wish to suffer and they never wish to inflict injustice. They have no sympathy with the wrong-doer, whether in Great Britain or in Ireland; and when they are fairly represented in the Imperial Parliament, as I hope they will one day be, they will speedily give an effective and final answer to that old question of the Parliament of Kilkenny—‘How comes it to pass that the King has never been the richer for Ireland?’” (Loud cheers.)

A deputation from the Cork Farmers’ Club called upon Mr. Bright the following day, and presented him with an address.

“But I have always had the opinion that a people are very much what their laws make them,” said Mr. Bright, in responding. “I entirely disbelieve those theories which assume that it does not matter very much what kind of laws you have—that, after all, everything depends on a man’s self. A great deal depends on a man’s self, but a great deal depends on the laws; and I think, if we trace history back and look over the countries we know something of, we shall find that the people are in the main what their laws and institutions make them. Now, my mind, from a very young age, has led me always to a feeling that laws should be equal and should be just; that all the people living in a country have an equal right to be considered and well treated by the institutions and laws under which they live. In this country, more

perhaps than in almost any other country in Europe, that has not been the principle on which the Government has been conducted, because it is quite clear that the laws have been made until recently by a party, or rather for the supremacy of a party more than for the whole people; and as regards the land, which is the question to which you particularly refer, there can be no kind of doubt of this, that the laws have been absolutely the product of the selfishness and ignorance of the landed proprietors, and by no means the product of the general intelligence of all classes in this country. It is the same to a great extent in England, where, as Mr. Murphy knows perfectly well, in the House of Commons there are questions which you can discuss with an expectation that they will be fairly considered; but if you come to any question connected with the land, with the supremacy of that particular property in the country, argument is of no avail whatever, and the slightest tendency to what I would call intelligence and justice with regard to that is met by the most determined opposition by the great landowning classes in the House. Of course, there are many admirable exceptions there, as there are here; but, on the whole, the great weight of that party and class is directed against any wise change in regard to the laws affecting property in land. . . . The Irish question has been to me one of great interest from my earliest connection with public life. I knew Mr. O'Connell with a certain intimacy, and when I was a very young member of the House of Commons I often, if I found an opportunity, sat by him, for I found his conversation not only very amusing but very instructive. He knew everybody, and almost everything, and his comments on all that passed were very pleasant to listen to, and often very informing. I don't know how—whether it is from a natural love of what is just or not—but I always had a great sympathy with the Irish people and Irish questions, and as long as I remain in Parliament, or in public life, or in life at all, and am capable of thinking, I believe I shall be of opinion that we in this generation do owe it to ourselves, and owe it to Ireland, to make such amends as we can for an amount of neglect, and cruelty, and injustice committed in the past, such as I think no civilised or Christian nation has ever inflicted on another Christian nation."

A meeting of the working men of Dublin was held in the Mechanics' Institute of the city on the 2nd of November, and Mr. Bright delivered a lengthy speech on the subject of Reform and the land question.

"I am very sorry that my voice is not what it was, and when I think of the work that is to be done sometimes I feel it is a pity we grow old so fast," remarked Mr. Bright. "But years ago, when I have thought of the condition of Ireland, of its sorrows and wrongs, of the discredit that its condition has brought upon the English, the Irish, and the British name, I have thought, if I could be in all other things the same, but by birth an Irishman, there is not a town in this Island I would not visit for the purpose of discussing the great Irish question, and of rousing my countrymen to some great and united action. I do not believe in the necessity of widespread and perpetual misery. I do not believe that we are placed on this Island, and on this earth, that one man might be great and wealthy, and revel in every profuse indulgence, and five, six, nine, or ten men should suffer the abject misery which we see so commonly in the world. With your soil, your climate, and your active and spirited race, I know not what they might not do. There have been reasons to my mind why soil and climate, and the labour of your population, have not produced general comfort and competence for all. The address speaks of the friendly feeling and the sympathy which I have had for Ireland during my political career. When I first went into the House of Commons the most prominent figure in it was Daniel O'Connell. I have sat by his side for hours during the discussions in that House, and listened to observations both amusing and instructive on what was passing under discussion. I have seen him, too, more than once upon our platform of the Anti-Corn-law League. I recollect that on one occasion he sent to Ireland expressly for a newspaper for me, which contained a report of a speech which he made against the corn law when the corn law was passing through Parliament in 1815, and we owe much to his exertions in connection with that question, for almost the whole Liberal—I suppose the whole Liberal—party of the Irish representatives in Parliament supported the measure of free trade of which we were the prominent advocates; and I know of nothing that was favourable to freedom, whether in connection with Ireland or England, that O'Connell did not support with all his great powers. I

know nothing pleasanter, and hardly anything more useful, than personal recollections of this nature. . . . I will tell you that, since the day when I sat beside O'Connell — and at an earlier day, I have considered this question of Ireland. In 1849, for several weeks in the autumn, and for several weeks in the autumn of 1852, I came to Ireland expressly to examine these questions by consulting with all classes of the people in every part of the Island. I will undertake to say that I believe there is no man in England who has more fully studied the evidence given before the celebrated Devon commission in regard to Ireland than I have. Therefore I dare stand up before any Irishman or Englishman to discuss the Irish question. I say that the plans, the theories, the policy of legislation of my opponents in this matter all have failed signally, deplorably, disastrously, ignominiously, and, therefore, I say that I have a right to come in and offer the people of Ireland, as I would offer to the people of Great Britain and the Imperial Parliament, a wise and just policy upon this question. You know that I have attended great meetings in England within the last two months, and in Scotland also. I think that I am at liberty to tender to you from those scores or hundreds of thousands of men the hand of fellowship and goodwill. I wish I might be permitted when I go back, as, in fact, I think by this address that I am permitted to say to them, that amidst the factions by which Ireland has been torn, amidst the many errors that have been committed, amidst the passions that have been excited, amidst the hopes that have been blasted, and amidst the misery that has been endured, there is still in this Island, and amongst its people, a heart that can sympathise with those who turn to them with a fixed resolution to judge them fairly, and to do them justice. (Loud cheers, which were prolonged for several minutes, the audience rising and waving their hats.) I have made my speech. I have said my say. I have fulfilled my small mission to you. I thank you from my heart for the kindness with which you have received me, which I shall never forget. And if I have in past times felt an unquenchable sympathy with the sufferings of your people, you may rely upon it that if there be an Irish member to speak for Ireland, he will find me heartily by his side."

A Reform Conference was next held in the Town Hall, Manchester, on the 20th of November, and the chair was occupied by Mr. George Wilson. In the evening a banquet was held in the Free-trade Hall, which presented a brilliant spectacle. It was got up by the National Reform Union. About 1,000 gentlemen were present. Mr. George Wilson was again in the chair.

"One thing I think we have a right to insist upon," remarked Mr. Bright, "that the next Bill which is introduced by a Liberal and Reform Government shall be in its suffrage based upon the ancient borough franchise of the country. Household or rating suffrage has existed for centuries in our parishes. It has existed for many years in our municipal corporations. It has never been found, either in parish or corporation, to be destructive of the interests of the people of those circumscribed districts of the country. I say, therefore, that we ought to stand by the ancient constitution of England. I believe Lord Russell, speaking of him in his private capacity, would be in favour of extending the borough franchise at least to the limits of the municipal franchise. There is reason to believe that Mr. Gladstone himself would approve of such a measure. We know that the late Attorney-General, one of the most eminent lawyers and one of the most accomplished members of the House of Commons, publicly and openly expressed himself in favour of that change. I believe the middle class, as a rule, the Liberal portion of the middle class, would have no objection to see the franchise extended to all householders in boroughs. I believe that if it were so extended we should arrive at a point at which, so long as any of us are permitted to meddle with the politics of our country, no further change would be demanded. I, therefore, am entirely in favour of it, because I believe it to be wise in itself, and because it is the ancient borough franchise of this kingdom. I am in accord with our ancient constitution. (Cheers.) I would stand by it; wherever it afforded support for freedom I would march in its track. That track is so plain that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein. (Cheers.) I would be guided by its lights. They have been kept burning by great men among forefathers for many generations. Our only safety in this warfare is in adhering to

the ancient and noble constitution of our country. (Cheers.) And when we have restored it to its bygone strength, and invited the great body of the people to take part in political power, then the House of Commons will be the servant of the nation and not its master, and it will do the bidding, not of a small, a limited, often an ignorant, necessarily a selfish class, but the bidding of a great and noble people." (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

A Reform demonstration was held in London on the 3rd of December, 1866. About 100,000 persons walked in procession. On the following evening a meeting was held in St. James's Hall, and the chair was occupied by Mr. George Potter, and on the platform were Messrs. J. Bright, T. B. Potter, J. Mason Jones, G. J. Holyoake, Lieut.-Col. Dickson, and P. P. M'Sweeny (Dublin).

"I said that if there be a grievance—a deep-seated sentiment that there is a grievance—there must necessarily be a voice to express and to proclaim it," said Mr. Bright, in a lengthy speech. "What is the grievance of which you complain? You are the citizens, the native inhabitants of a country which is called constitutional; and what is meant by that is that your government is not the despotic government of a monarch, nor the oligarchical government of an oligarchy; but that it is a government, a large and essential portion of which is conducted by honestly elected representatives of the people; and the grievance is this—that this constitution, so noble in its outline and so noble in its purpose, is defaced and deformed, and that when you look at it it seems in this respect absolutely worse than any other representative constitution existing in the world. For I believe there is no representation whatsoever at this moment, in America or in Europe, that is so entirely deformed from its natural, just, and beautiful proportions, as is the representative system of this country. What can be more clear than this—that the aristocracy of land and of wealth usurp the power in both Houses of Parliament? The Lords represent themselves and generally the great landowners with great fidelity. But, at the same time, we must admit and deplore that at least one-half of the House of Commons is in fast alliance with the majority of the House of Lords.

"Now, I have said before—I repeat it again—that there is no security whatsoever for liberty under any government unless there be an essential power in a fair representation of the nation. An illustrious man, the founder of the great province, and now the great State, of Pennsylvania—William Penn—in the preface to his Constitution for that province—a Constitution of the widest and most generous freedom—uses these words:—'Any government is free to the people under it, whatever be the frame, where the laws rule, and the people are a party to the laws; and more than this is tyranny, oligarchy, or confusion.' Now, let us ask ourselves, can it be fairly said, can it be said without the most direct falsehood, that the people of this country, through the House of Commons, are really a party to the laws that are made? It is not at all disputed that only sixteen out of every hundred men are now on the electoral rolls, and are able, all other circumstances favouring, to give their vote at a general election; and it is not disputed that half the House of Commons—that an absolute majority of that House—is elected by a number of electors not exceeding altogether three men out of every hundred in the United Kingdom."

Mr. Ayrton, M.P., in his address, made some remarks reflecting indirectly on the Queen, which brought forth strong expressions of dissent from the meeting. Mr. Bright thereupon rose and said:—

"I rise for the purpose of making, in one sentence, a reference to a portion of Mr. Ayrton's speech—(cheers)—which I hope I did not fully comprehend, but if I did, in which I am totally unable to concur. He made an allusion to the great meeting of yesterday, to the assemblage in the park and the neighbourhood of the Palace. He also made observations with regard to the Queen, which, in my opinion, no meeting of the people in this country, and certainly no meeting of Reformers,

ought to have listened to with approbation. (Cheers.) Let it be remembered that there has been no occasion on which any Ministry has proposed an improved representation of the people when the Queen has not given her cordial, unhesitating, and, I believe, hearty assent. (Cheers.) Let it be remembered, if there be now at her side a Ministry that is opposed to an improvement of the representation of the people, it is because, in obedience to the well-known rules and constitutional practice, the decision of the House of Commons on the Bill of last session rendered it necessary for her to take the course which she then did take. But Mr. Ayrton referred further to a supposed absorption of the sympathies of the Queen with her late husband to the exclusion of sympathy for and with the people. (Hear, hear.) I am not accustomed to stand up in defence of those who are possessors of crowns. (Hear, hear.) But I could not sit here and hear that observation without a sensation of wonder and of pain. (Loud cheers.) I think there has been by many persons a great injustice done to the Queen in reference to her desolate and widowed position. (Cheers.) And I venture to say that a woman, be she the queen of a great realm, or the wife of one of your labouring men, who can keep alive in her heart a great sorrow for the lost object of her life and affection, is not at all likely to be wanting in a great and generous sympathy with you."

The audience cheered enthusiastically, and concluded by singing the National Anthem. This incident, with others that occurred during Mr. Bright's lifetime, showed his loyalty, the great respect he entertained for the Queen, his deep sympathy for the loss she had sustained, and his admiration of the constancy and faithfulness which made it impossible for her to forget the death of her dearest earthly companion.

CHAPTER XL.

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE QUESTION OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

Mr. Bright Slandered—Sympathy expressed by his Workmen and Townsmen—Mr. Disraeli's Thirteen Reform Resolutions—The Government obliged to frame a Bill—Mr. Bright's Criticism of the Bill—A Reform Bill passed—The Irish Church—Resolutions in favour of Disestablishment passed by the Commons and thrown out by the Lords—At Liverpool, Limerick, Birmingham, and Edinburgh.

ABOUT this time untruthful statements were made respecting Mr. Bright, to the effect that he was disliked by his workpeople, and had never subscribed to the Cotton Famine Relief Fund. The principal persons who had given utterance to such statements were Mr. Richard Garth, M.P., Mr. Pope Hennessey, Mr. Ferrand, and the Rev. W. Chamberlain, of Little Bolton Hall. When Mr. Garth was called upon to substantiate his accusations, he endeavoured to explain them away.

"On a review of your speech and your letter," wrote Mr. Bright, in reply, "I came to this conclusion—that you wished to get into Parliament, and were not particular as to the path which might lead to it. You threw dirt during your canvass, doubtless knowing that if needful you could eat it afterwards. There are many men who go through dirt to dignities, and I suspect you have no objection to be one of them."

If these persons who had circulated the defamatory statements respecting Mr. Bright had taken the trouble to inquire among the workmen, or from his townsmen, they would have ascertained that the relations between employer and workpeople were of the kindest nature. These inferior adherents of the Conservative party had little gracious feeling to spare towards Mr. Bright, and were too ready to utter slander and groundless calumny against him, but *their* dispraise was praise. The splendour of his political renown attracted these "silly moths," who were wishful to gain celebrity even by attempting to "eat an honest name." They were, however, unable to deface that likeness of him which history will deliver to posterity; still they will be consigned to immortality, like the fly in amber, by merits not their own. They were not awed by shame when his own townsmen testified that in the privacies of his life he was candid, just, amiable, and generous; but their calumnious and malicious statements lost their sting, and received a complete refutation by the workpeople of Mr. Bright, who took the matter up, and called a public meeting, in the Public Hall, Rochdale, on the evening of the 25th

January, 1867, to which they invited Mr. Bright, and they presented him with the following address:—

“Honoured Sir,—We, the workpeople employed by the firm of which you are the head, desire to convey our entire sympathy with, and our sincere respect for, you under the malignant slanders which have been urged against you as our employer. We feel impelled by a sense of duty to take this opportunity of declaring to you that all the reports which have been circulated against you throughout the country are entirely false. They have been made and written by parties who, to make political capital, have attacked, in an unscrupulous and base manner, your private character. We are well aware that the consciousness of those attacks being untrue will be sufficient to uphold you in the dignity to which you have attained. Your conduct as our employer has been such as to meet with our entire approval. You have always endeavoured to improve our moral, social, and intellectual well-being. As a public character, your best endeavours have been to raise the great wealth-producing class to the full rights of citizenship, and we take this opportunity of saying that your public acts have invariably met with our approbation; we pray that your valuable life, as an employer and statesman, may long be spared to your family and country, and at last you may meet with the great and just, and be welcomed as a good and faithful servant.”

Mr. Bright remarked in his reply :

“You know—every man and woman in this assembly knows—every honourable man in Rochdale knows—that there is not the shadow of a shade of foundation for the charges that have been made against me. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) The men who have made these charges for the most part could have no knowledge of the facts, and having no knowledge of the facts, it being not probable that they could be true, I say they have exhibited themselves to the country as men without a spark of honour—(hear, hear)—and slanderers of the most disgraceful and odious character. (Hear, hear.) To those who live in the neighbourhood, even I should say to a large portion of my countrymen, judging either from my life at home or from my public career, they might have found a sufficient answer to these charges. (Hear, hear.) . . . For myself, looking over my past life—and it is a much longer lane to look over now than it was some years ago—I can see a great number of shortcomings, which I feel ashamed of. I can see many failures which I ought to have avoided; I can recollect resolutions formed to do good things—which have failed from some unexplained feebleness of action; still I have worked on, and I hope not without some little result upon the condition of the people and the interest of our common country. (Hear, hear.) I meet you to-night with an inexpressible pleasure. You are the nearest to me in my neighbourhood. (Hear, hear.) You tell me that so far as the conduct of my brothers and myself goes in regard to our business relations with you, you have only that of which you can generally approve. You tell me that you have observed my public life, and that you find in that not only nothing to condemn but much to approve of. (Hear, hear, and applause.) You say in your address and your speeches that you confide in me; that you believe, whether in the country or in that House in which I expect to be a fortnight hence, that I shall never forget your interests and never betray them. (Cheers.) I thank you for your kindness, all of you—my friend, the chairman (Mr. James Tweedale), those who spoke in moving and seconding the address, all of you have received their expressions with approbation—I thank you for your kindness. I am greatly cheered by your reception of me to-night. (Applause.) I am strengthened by the sympathy you have shown me, and I beg to assure you, from my heart, that the event of this day, which I can never forget, will be always to me an abundant compensation for anything that I can possibly do or suffer in your cause.” (Great cheering.)

Mr. Bright's townsmen, who were intimately conversant with his domestic life as well as his public career, and who were well qualified to judge how far his public professions coincided with his private life, next held a meeting in a large building in Rochdale, on the 30th of January. Mr. H. Kelsall, J.P.,

occupied the chair, and a large number of gentlemen sat on the platform as well as in the body of the meeting, to whom Mr. Bright's career from boyhood was familiar. And the events of the evening seemed to throw a new light on his character as a statesman, a private citizen, and a man. Influential gentlemen from neighbouring towns signified their desire to be present; but as it was purely a meeting of his own townsmen, and the applications for admittance were so numerous, they could not be accommodated.

The following address was presented to Mr. Bright:—

"Honoured Sir,—We, your fellow-townsmen, in public meeting assembled, desire to express the sincere admiration we feel for your private character, and your long and distinguished career in advancing the social and political condition of the people. The services you have rendered to our common country, in conjunction with the illustrious and lamented Mr. Cobden, the nation and the world know, and we are thankful to believe that the great announcement of 'Peace on earth and goodwill to men' has received another impetus by your noble effort to establish friendly relations between the nations of the earth. As an employer of labour you have ever manifested the strongest desire to educate and elevate the working man, and numerous instances testify that you have always been guided by a love of justice and humanity. We know, sir, that during your long advocacy of the people's cause your words have frequently been misrepresented and your character unjustly attacked; and though we are assured that you will be ever sustained by the consciousness that your cause is just, we cannot but express our sympathy with you, and hope that you may long live to champion the cause of popular freedom."

Mr. Bright, in acknowledging the compliment, in one part of his speech said:—

"Wondering sometimes at those varied and continued assaults, I have just cast a look over the twenty-five years of political life which I have lived, and I have asked myself how it happens that that is done in political life which is not done in any other kind of life with which we are acquainted? A man may be very active and in the forefront of a religious controversy; he may hold the same position in some literary controversy or some scientific disputation; but no man living, however much opposed to him, would think of pursuing him with that rancorous spirit which, unfortunately, is introduced into political controversy, and which has pursued me with an unrelenting animosity, not for months only, but for years past. (Cries of 'Shame,' and cheers.) And looking over those twenty-five years, I found, as far as my mental eye could detect, that my path had been straightforward, not varying, so far as I know, to the right hand or to the left from any unworthy motive. (Cheers.) I found that the principle upon which I had acted was well defined, was distinctly avowed, and was easily comprehended, and the principle was simply this, that the law and the administration of the law in this country should regard with equal eye all classes of people—(cheers)—and that to all questions of government we should bring those simple but sublime principles, the high and everlasting principles of a pure morality which we derive, or think we derive, from the religion which we profess. (Cheers.) Now, in these twenty-five years, so far as I know, I find no divergence from the principle with which I set out; but unfortunately, in some respects, I have not allied myself with any political party. The public men of this country are mainly of two parties; the public press, until recently, was of two parties; and if any politician took a line independent of those two parties, he did not, and could not, hope to receive any friendly support from either of them. Perhaps I have held a peculiar position from another ground. As you know, I am a member of a small but somewhat remarkable religious sect—(hear, hear)—a religious body which had a remarkable origin, and which in its early days, at least, had a somewhat remarkable history. It is, of all the religious sects which have ever appeared in the

world—certainly since the first corruption of the Christian Church—it is that which of all others has most taught the equality and the equal rights of men. (Hear, hear.) And I venture to say more, that it is remarkable for another thing: that, probably more than any other body, within its borders and in its service, personal ambition is practically unknown. (Hear, hear.) I think that much of my opinions and much of my course has been determined, or at least greatly influenced, by the training I received in that body. (Hear, hear.) That belief in the equality of all men in the sight of Heaven, and in the equal rights of all men before earthly Governments, naturally leads to a strong sympathy with the great body of the people. (Hear, hear.) I looked upon the multitude, the millions who form the nation. In social rank they may be called the lowly. They labour more, they suffer more, than the ranks above them. (Hear, hear.) They have less of what we consider the enjoyments of life; they have fewer of those compensations which give to us who are better off the main charms of life. (Hear, hear.) And I have learned from my earliest youth to feel for these men—(loud and prolonged cheering)—to feel for them a sympathy which I have never been able to express in words, and of which I can find no proper exhibition, in any outward conduct which I can exhibit to them.” (Cheers.)

In the Royal Speech, on the opening of Parliament, in February, this year, it was stated—

“Your attention will again be called to the state of the representation of the people in Parliament, and I trust that your deliberations, conducted in a spirit of moderation and mutual forbearance, may lead to the adoption of measures, which, without unduly disturbing the balance of political power, shall freely extend the elective franchise.”

On the 11th of February, Mr. Disraeli submitted thirteen resolutions, as the basis for the measure of Reform. This movement was regarded as an attempt to evade responsibility, and both Liberals and Tories rejected the proposition. Driven from this device, the Government was obliged to frame a Bill. On the 18th of March, Mr. Disraeli propounded a bolder scheme, by stating that the Government accepted the principle that the franchise should be associated with the payment of rates, and they therefore proposed that every householder paying rates, and having resided in the same place for two years, should be admitted to vote. This, he stated, would admit 237,000 men who lived in houses under £10 and paid rates, leaving unfranchised 486,000 householders not paying their own rates. The Bill would also contain an education franchise, and would give votes to holders of Savings Bank deposits and funded property to the amount of £50. The direct tax franchise would add more than 200,000 voters, the education franchise 35,000, the funded property franchise 25,000, and the Savings Bank franchise 45,000; in all, more than 1,000,000 would be added to the borough constituencies. In the counties the franchise would be fixed at £15 rating, which would add 171,000, and the lateral franchises would bring the total additions to the county constituencies up to something like 330,000. Thirty seats would be redistributed; fourteen to boroughs, fifteen to counties, and one to the London University.

A second Reform demonstration was held at Birmingham on the 22nd of April, and the gathering numbered upwards of 50,000. In the evening, a meeting was convened in the Town Hall, and was presided over by the Mayor. Mr. Bright attributed the change of opinion of Conservatives on the matter of Reform to the meetings that had been held in various parts of the country, but he regarded the Government Bill with suspicion, and said he should prefer one that was clear, simple, and honest, and free from tricks.

Mr. Bright was present at a Reform meeting held in St. James's Hall, London, on the 15th of May, and said :—

"The members of that Administration have not dared altogether to refuse to defer to public opinion; but, whilst pretending to do that which the people want, they have, in almost every clause of their Bill, introduced something of a pernicious tendency, that should make the whole Bill of very small value to the country. (Cheers.) Now, I shall not say much about the basis of the borough franchise, except this, that I think it bad, and that a requirement that all men should pay a certain rate, the poor rate, will inevitably, in the lowest class of voters, afford at least great opportunity for corruption. But as we cannot expect that in the provisions of a Bill everything should be as we wish, I will not even quarrel with the basis of the Bill, if the basis of the Bill had been fairly applied, and where it could not apply, if some other mode of enfranchising the people had been adopted, so that through the broad land of England and Wales the same common justice should have been meted out to all the householders in all the boroughs. (Hear, hear.) The newspapers tell us, some of them—(great laughter)—that nobody can comprehend what the compound householder is, that the thing has been so much discussed that those who knew nothing before know nothing still—(laughter)—and those who thought they knew everything find themselves in a state of complete confusion. (Renewed laughter.) But this Bill, if passed to-night, and coming into operation under the most favourable circumstances, and operating as I believe its framers hope and intend it will operate, would offer to 245,000 men, in all the boroughs of England and Wales, the elective franchise, on condition that every one of them had resided twelve months in the borough, paid his rate, and taken whatever steps may be necessary to see that his name is left neither off the rate-book nor off the register. Now, it is an admitted fact in the House of Commons, that if you take the whole number and divide it by two, you will get as near as possible to the actual number of persons who would come upon the register."

The second reading of the Government Reform Bill was brought before the House of Commons on 21st of July.

"Sir," said Mr. Bright, during the discussion, "it seems to me impossible to assist a Government which will not tell us frankly what it intends, what it stands by, what it will get rid of—which asks us to go into its confidence, and yet is probably the most reticent Government that ever sat on those benches. If any gentlemen on this side were to treat you as you treated us last year, I should denounce them in the strongest language I could use. I hate the ways, I scorn the purposes of faction; and if I am driven now, or at any stage of this Bill, to oppose the Government, it is because the measure they have offered to us bears upon its face marks of deception and disappointment, and because I will be no party to any Bill which would cheat the great body of my countrymen of the possession of that power in this House on which they have set their hearts, and which, as I believe, by the constitution of this country they may most justly claim." (Loud cheers.)

The following evening it was read, without a division, and passed on the 6th of August. The Lords introduced a few

amendments, such as that in large constituencies, which were to send three members to Parliament, the electors should have only two votes, thus providing for the representation of minorities. This amendment was maintained by a majority of 49 votes. The votes of electors of the City of London were restricted to three; and on the 15th of August the Bill received the Royal assent.

Thus the original Bill was ultimately transformed into an extremely liberal measure by the tactics of the Liberals, and Lord Cranborne admitted that the Bill had been modified according to the demands made by Mr. Gladstone, on the principles laid down by Mr. Bright, so that really it was an attempt to gain renown out of the many years' labour of Mr. Bright:—

"Perhaps you are not aware of this fact," said Mr. Bright to his constituents, "that although the Act of last session contained no less than sixty-one clauses, there were left in it when the Bill passed only four complete and perfect clauses as the Government offered them to the House. Out of sixty-one clauses, forty-one were materially altered, sixteen of them being borrowed from Mr. Gladstone's Bill of 1866. Only four passed as the Government proposed them to the House. I will tell you what those clauses were. The first was the clause which gives the title to the Bill; the second was the clause which disfranchised the boroughs of Lancaster, Yarmouth, Reigate, and Totnes; the third was a clause imposing a penalty if anybody corruptly paid the rates of any elector; and the fourth was some temporary provision for the registration of some divided counties or boroughs. I should like to ask you how the Bill would have been made worth one single farthing if somebody had not voted against all the evil parts of it as it first came before the House?"

Mr. Bright, in a speech delivered on the 6th of August in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester, against the minority clause, said:—

"I say that the proposition which has been accepted, which was rejected by the House of Commons, and which has been accepted by the Lords, is a proposition aimed with a deadly malice at the political power of the great constituencies of the kingdom. (Loud cheers.) I find myself, curiously enough, constantly called upon to stand upon and to defend the ancient lines of our venerable constitution. (Laughter and cheers.) I am rather, like Mr. Jones—but I am not sure that I should speak it with so much enthusiasm as he did—I am rather an admirer of many things that are ancient, sometimes, not because they are very useful, but I can admire them if they are harmless. (Hear.) I would not advise my countrymen with hasty and irreverent hands to pull down that which has been left them by their forefathers until they see their way clearly to build up in its place something that will tend more to the true greatness and the lasting happiness of their country—(cheers)—but I ask them to reject this new and worst device of their opponents, because it has within it a principle as I believe disastrous and fatal to everything which we comprehend, and which our forefathers have comprehended, of the true principle of popular representation. (Cheers.) I prefer, infinitely prefer, the practice of the robust common sense of those who have gone before us to this new scheme which is offered to us with so many professions for our good. (Cheers.) I regard it—I say it here without fear of whomsoever it may strike—I regard it as the offspring and the spawn of feeble minds. (Loud cheers.) It may have been, for aught I know, born of eccentric genius—(laughter)—it may have and probably has been discovered in some of those abysses in which the speculative mind of man delights to plunge. (Hear, and a voice, 'The cave.') But I prefer, I tell you honestly, that which our forefathers understood of freedom, of popular representation, of the mode of manufacturing a great Parliament, to any of these new-fangled and miserable schemes which have come into light in our day." (Cheers.)

In March, 1883, Mr. Bright further remarked :—

“Well, before the House Mr. Disraeli made an admirable speech against it, and the bulk of his party—I am not sure if all of his party—voted with him. But that was in rejecting the clause. When it came down the second time, having come from the Lords, we heard with some surprise that Mr. Disraeli and his followers were going to vote for it—for that which he had so utterly condemned a short time before. I remonstrated privately with some of them upon this. I thought it was a grievous thing that Mr. Disraeli, understanding the question as well as he did, should take such a course. Now for the explanation. A friend of Mr. Disraeli, connected with his Government, very much trusted by him, and deservedly, spoke to me about it, and lamented the course which was about to be taken. He said Mr. Disraeli had not in the least changed his opinion, that his view was against it, as it had been before, and as mine remained : but he said he was in this difficult position, that all the amendments the Lords had made to the Bill (I do not mean verbal amendments, but amendments really affecting the force and character of the Bill), we had rejected one after the other as they came up, and there remained only this one thing the Lords had done that the House of Commons had not rejected. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘Lord Derby had more difficulty in getting this Bill through the House of Lords than some of you perhaps think he had. If the Bill were to go back without one single amendment of the Lords having been accepted by the Commons, it is impossible to say what effect it would have upon the fate of the measure.’ (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Well, there was the explanation at that very time. Mr. Disraeli was not in favour of this amendment, and if we had admitted some one or two of the other of the Lords’ amendments, he could not have supported the argument ; in all probability he would not have supported the clause, and on that ground excused it.”

At a meeting held in the Prince of Wales Theatre, Rochdale, on the 23rd December, 1867, to celebrate the return of Mr. Jacob Bright as a representative for Manchester, presided over by the Mayor (Mr. Charles Whittaker), Mr. John Bright, in adverting to Mr. Gladstone’s Reform Bill, said :—

“At that time, of course, they were determined against Reform, and what changed their opinion between then and the session of ’67 was, no doubt, the great meetings which were held in different parts of the country, which showed them at once that if they met Parliament without a promise of a Bill, within one single fortnight after the meeting of Parliament they would have to go back to the old side of the house which they sat on so long, and in which they seemed to me never to feel the smallest degree of comfort. (Cheers and laughter.) During the session of ’66 it was impossible, in language which you would not think exaggerated and unfair, and almost insulting, to describe the eager and howling rage which they exhibited against that unfortunate proposition of a £7 franchise. (Hear, hear.) Their bitterness and malice against Mr. Gladstone really would not have been justified if he had been as bad as they said he was, and it is clear now that he was not half so bad as they themselves have proved themselves to be. (Laughter and cheers.) Their conduct in the pursuit of office reminds me of some lines, which I will quote if they will not think it too unkind—(laughter)—which were published a good many years ago, and which have never had, I believe, a more exact application than when used to describe the course of the Tory party last year. The poet, I think in the ‘Rejected Addresses,’ says :—

‘So when “dogs’ meat” re-echoes thro’ the streets,
Rush sympathetic dogs from their retreats,
Beam with bright blaze their supplicating eyes,
Sink their hind legs, ascend their joyful cries,
Each wild with hope and maddening to prevail,
Points the pleased ear and wags the expectant tail.’

(Shouts of laughter, continued for some time.) Just so with the gentlemen on the front Opposition bench, and such of them behind who thought that something was to be had—especially, and above all, the lawyers—(cheers and laughter)—who have since been gorged with patronage. (Loud cheers.) They, for the sake of that patronage and that plunder—that which in India is called ‘loot,’—formed a combination to

overthrow the Bill of 1866 to place themselves in office. (Cheers.) And to keep themselves in office, having found themselves there, they consent to pass a Bill infinitely worse in all the points in which they condemned the Bill of 1866—(hear, hear)—and I venture to say that their conduct on this occasion leads to the conclusion that there is scarcely an institution in the country, however honourable and however ancient, that they would not sell for the permanent possession of office. (Loud cheers.) But if there be opportunities thus to criticise the conduct of the Parliamentary Tory party, we may not the less rejoice in the triumph which our principles have achieved. (Hear, hear.) But there is more to be added. They were not willing quietly that the thing should be done, but they have, since the rising of Parliament, taken steps to add greatly to our triumph, for we have seen the principal leaders of the party at great banquets, in different parts of the country, rejoice in a sort of grotesque exultation over the success of principles which have all along been our principles, and which they have declared in a thousand speeches were absolutely destructive of the constitution and the true interests of the country. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) And to crown the whole thing, such a—what shall I say?—spectacle as that has, I believe, not been before seen in the political annals of this country. We have had Lord Derby, the last defender of protection—(laughter)—and the last and foremost bulwark against democracy—(hear, hear, and laughter)—we have seen him exhibiting himself in the defence of Free-trade and household suffrage on the platform of the Free-trade Hall in Manchester. (Laughter and cheers.) Notwithstanding this, I suppose our friends the Tories will still—as their credulity has no limit—(laughter)—believe in him. They must believe in somebody—(laughter)—and he will stand as a sort of saint and hero in the political calendar of the Conservative party. . . . If Ireland is to be made content, if her wounds are to be healed, if there is to be henceforth what there never has been—a united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland—if the sceptre of the Queen, representing the majesty of the law, shall ever be of equal authority east and west of the Channel, it must be done, and it can only be done, by measures of great statesmanship and of justice. (Cheers.) The morals of the turf, laid on the floor of Parliament, or in the secrecy of the Cabinet, will fail here. The disease which we are discussing is one of a different character. But there are remedies, unless it be that remedies are too late. Has this country fallen so low that it can produce no statesman equal to these things? I say the man who, leading in the counsels of the Queen's Government, shall grasp this great question and end it—who shall comprehend the remedies, and shall administer them and make them law—he would do that which in future time the pen of history will delight to trace. He may to the very full gratify the noblest ambition of his mind, and he may build up for himself a lasting memorial in the happiness and the gratitude of a regenerated nation.” (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright was present at a breakfast given by Mr. J. S. Wright, the chairman of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, on the 5th of February, to the artisans who had visited the Paris Exhibition:—

“Now, suppose we had in this country all the working people educated,” remarked Mr. Bright—“I mean thus far, that every boy and girl amongst them, as near as could be, should understand how to read, should comprehend what was read, should go through the ordinary rules of arithmetic, and had that little general knowledge which every child picks up at school—such as a little knowledge of history, a little knowledge of geography, and probably a little knowledge of drawing—supposing that this knowledge was universal among all the children of the labouring classes, what else would be necessary? You would find from out of the vast body that there would be certain boys who could by no means be kept down to the level at which they left school. There would be found in their mind and brain an energy compelling them to do something more, and the desire to do it, so that if you set them upon Salisbury Plain without anybody within five miles of them, still they would carry on in some way or other their education, and would become technically educated, because one would be led into one branch, and another into another, and these children specially gifted, as you find some children in all ranks of life, would become your leaders in all your various arts and manufactures. In my opinion, then, it will not be necessary to have much of what is called technical training for particular trades.”

Mr. Bright addressed his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 14th of February, 1868:—

"There is nothing that Ireland could do for herself if she were a State of the American Union which the Parliament in London, if it be statesmanlike and just, cannot do for Ireland. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Now, suppose we had a Parliament in Dublin that was elected by a fair and free and equal vote of the householders of the Irish nation, does anybody believe that there would exist in that country an institution such as there is now under the name of the Protestant Established Church? (No, no.) Let nobody suppose I am hostile to the Protestant Church or to Protestantism. (Hear.) I am myself, as you know, a Protestant of Protestants. (Loud cheers.) I can have no kind of religious sympathy with many of the practices of the Catholic Church; therefore when I am speaking of the Protestant Church I am speaking purely of a political State organisation. (Hear, hear.) If any would say that with such a Parliament in Dublin the Irish people would permit that political State Church to exist, he must have this kind of idea of Ireland and the Irish people—he must believe that Ireland is no better than one huge lunatic asylum. (Laughter and applause.) Then, why should the people of England, being the most powerful section of the three kingdoms—why should our Parliament in England maintain and support that church against the individual opinions and the thousand-times-repeated protests of the great majority of the Irish people? (Hear, hear.) That Church has been maintained there for the sake of building up what in time past were considered English interests. A supremacy party was established with the idea of preserving the union with England, and it has become in our time, more than all other institutions, that which most imperils that union. (Hear, and applause.) Now, I believe that nobody who really can have any kind of claim, from thinking on the question, to give an opinion upon it, would say that we, the people of England, the Parliament of Great Britain, can pretend any longer to govern Ireland upon the principles and in accordance with the prejudices and the fashions of that supremacy party in Ireland. (Hear, hear.) . . . I recollect when Daniel O'Connell was in the House of Commons, and on many occasions I sat by him. I asked him on one occasion if he would write me an autograph for a lady, a relative of mine, who wished to preserve it. He went into the lobby, and, taking a pen, he wrote these four lines. Speaking of Ireland, he said (I don't know that the lines were his own composition, but he wrote them):—

Within that land was many a malecontent,
Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;
That land full many a wringing despot saw,
Who worked his tyranny in form of law."

Mr. Maguire, on the 13th of March, introduced a motion to the effect that the House should resolve itself into a committee to consider the condition of Ireland. He attributed the land grievance and the existence of the Established Church as the chief causes of Irish discontent.

The Earl of Mayo, in introducing the Government's proposal, stated that a Commission would be appointed to inquire into the whole state of the relations between landlord and tenant; and in the meantime a Bill would be introduced providing for an easy compensation for money laid out in improvements, and another for rendering more efficient the working of Irish railways. The general education of the people was already under the consideration of a Commission, and it was proposed to grant a charter to a Roman Catholic university. With regard to the Irish Church, it was not proposed to take any immediate action. In the adjourned debate on the

14th of March, Mr. Bright remarked that the cause of discontent and disloyalty was well known by the Government, particularly by Mr. Disraeli, adding :—

"I am in favour of more proprietors, and some, of course, will be small and some will be large; but it would be quite possible for Parliament, if it thought fit to attempt anything of this kind, to fix a limit below which it would not assist the owner to sell or the purchaser to buy. I believe that you can establish a class of moderate proprietors, who will form a body intermediate between the great owners of land and those who are absolutely landless, which will be of immense service in giving steadiness, loyalty, and peace to the whole population of the island. . . . It reminds me of an anecdote which is related by Addison. Writing about the curious things which happened in his time, he says that there was a man who made a living by cheating the country people. I do not know whether it was in Buckinghamshire or not. (Laughter.) He was not a Cabinet minister—he was only a mountebank—(great laughter)—and he set up a stall, and sold pills that were very good against the earthquake. (Roars of laughter.) Well, that is about the state of things that we are in now. There is an earthquake in Ireland. Does anybody doubt it? I will not go into the evidence of it, but I will say that there has been a most extraordinary alarm—some of it extravagant, I will admit—throughout the whole of the three kingdoms; and although Fenianism may be but a low, a reckless, and an ignorant conspiracy, the noble lord has admitted that there is discontent and disaffection in the country; and when the member for one of the great cities of Ireland comes forward and asks the Imperial Parliament to discuss this great question—this social and political earthquake under which Ireland is heaving—the noble lord comes forward and offers that there shall be a clerically governed endowed university for the sons, I suppose, of the Catholic gentlemen of Ireland. I have never heard a more unstatesmanlike or more unsatisfactory proposition; and I believe the entire disfavoured with which it has been received in this House is only a proper representation of the condemnation which it will receive from the great majority of the people of the three kingdoms. (Cheers.) . . . We are, after all, of one religion. I imagine that there will come a time in the history of the world when men will be astonished that Catholics and Protestants have had so much animosity against and suspicion of each other. I accept the belief in a grand passage which I once met with in the writings of the illustrious founder of the colony of Pennsylvania. He says that "The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious, and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death has taken off the mask they will know one another, though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers." Now, may I ask the House to act in this spirit, and then our work will be easy. (Cheers.) The noble lord, towards the conclusion of his speech, spoke of the cloud which rests at present over Ireland. It is a dark and heavy cloud, and its darkness extends over the feelings of men in all parts of the British Empire. But there is a consolation which we may all take to ourselves. An inspired king and bard and prophet has left us words which are not only the expression of a fact, but which we may take as the utterance of a prophecy. He says, 'To the upright there ar setteth light in the darkness.' Let us try in this matter to be upright. Let us try to be just. (Cheers.) That cloud will be dispelled. The dangers which surround us will vanish, and we may yet have the happiness of leaving to our children the heritage of an honourable citizenship in a united and prosperous empire." (Loud Cheers.)

Mr. Gladstone took part in the discussion, and said that the Established Church must cease to exist, and religious equality be established. Not many days after he tabulated resolutions affirming the necessity for disestablishing and disendowing the Established Church of Ireland, and on the 30th of March he introduced his speech in favour of his resolutions. Mr. Bright, in

"I think I ought to appeal to every member of the House who now hears me, whether, if he had been placed in Ireland with his father before him among the

Catholic population—I might ask him whether he would not have felt that if he threw off his allegiance to his Church, and if he entered the portals of this garrison Church, that it would have been to him not only a change of faith, but a denial, as it were, of his birth and of his country. I have felt always in considering this question—and I have considered it much for twenty-five years past—that all the circumstances of that Church in Ireland have been such as to stimulate the heart of every Catholic to a stronger adherence to his own faith, and to a determined and unchangeable rejection of the faith and of the Church which were offered to him by the hands of conquest. There is one point on this, too, which is important—that the more you have produced dissatisfaction with Imperial rule in Ireland, the more you have thrown the population into the hands of Rome. Now, I hope I shall offend no Catholic Member in this House when I say that I consider it one of the greatest calamities of the world that there are in many countries millions of Catholic population who are liable to be directed in much of their conduct, and often in their political conduct, through their bishop and clergy from the centre of the city of Rome. I think that is a misfortune—I think it is a misfortune to the freedom of the world. And I think, moreover, that it is a misfortune to every Catholic Church in every country, for it tends to prevent it from being wholly national, and it prevents also such changes and such reformatations as, I believe, are necessary in the progress of every Church. . . . Let us take this Irish State Church; let us take it, not with a rude—I am against rudeness and harshness in legislative action—but if not with a rude, still with a resolute, grasp. If you adopt the policy we recommend, you will pluck up a weed which pollutes the air. ('Oh, oh.') I will give hon. gentlemen consolation in the conclusion of the sentence—I say you will pluck up a weed which pollutes the air; but you will leave a free Protestant Church, which will be hereafter an ornament and a grace to all those who may be brought within the range of its influence. (Cheers.) Sir, I said in the beginning of my observations that the people of three kingdoms are waiting with anxious suspense for the solution of this question. Ireland waits and longs. I appeal to the right hon. gentleman, the member for Limerick (Mr. Monsell); I appeal to that meeting, the character of which he can describe, and perhaps may describe, to the House; and I say that Ireland waits and longs for a great act of reconciliation. I say, further, that England and Scotland are eager to make atonement for past crimes and past errors; and I say, yet further, that it depends upon us, this House of Commons, this Imperial Parliament, whether that reconciliation shall take place, and whether that atonement shall at length be made." (Cheers.)

Mr. Gladstone's motion for going into committee was carried by a majority of 56.

Mr. Disraeli, on the 4th of May, informed the House that he had advised her Majesty to dissolve Parliament, but at the same time placed the resignation of himself and his colleagues at Her Majesty's disposal; at a second interview she declined to accept the Premier's resignation, but signified her readiness to dissolve Parliament as soon as the state of public business permitted.

On the 7th of May Mr. Gladstone's second and third Irish Church resolutions were carried in committee without a division. Mr. Disraeli predicted that there would be a quarrel amongst the Liberals over the division of what he termed plunder.

"I have held consistently for twenty years," said Mr. Bright, "the conviction which the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government himself held then, and which, if it were possible now to put him under an accurate examination from which he could not flinch, he would be obliged to say that he holds now; because, on a recent occasion, he admitted that the main sentiment of that speech which he delivered twenty-five years ago was right. But I am in a different position from the right hon. gentleman. I have not been endeavouring to climb the ladder of Parliamentary promotion and notoriety. ('Oh,' and cheers.) No, Sir, I have only had the

single object—so far as I have had anything to do with Irish questions—to promote what appeared to be just to that country, and which would tend to the advantage of the United Kingdom. The right hon. gentleman the other night, in a manner at once pompous and servile, talked at large of the interviews which he had with his Sovereign. I venture to say that a Minister who deceives his Sovereign is as guilty as the conspirator who would dethrone her. ('Oh,' and cheers.) I do not charge the right hon. gentleman with deceiving his Sovereign; but if he has not changed the opinion which he held twenty-five years ago, and which he has said in the main was right, then I fear that he has not stated all that was his duty to state in the interviews which he had with his Sovereign. Let me tell hon. gentlemen opposite, and the right hon. gentleman in particular, that any man in this country who puts the Sovereign in the front of a great struggle like this into which it may be we are about to enter—who points to the Irish people, and says from the floor of this House, 'Your Queen holds the flag under which we, the enemies of religious equality and justice to Ireland, are marshalled'—I say that the Minister who does that is guilty of a very high crime and a great misdemeanour against his Sovereign and against his country. And there is no honour, and there is no reputation, there is no glory, there is no future fame that any Minister can gain by conduct like this, that will acquit him before posterity of one of the most grievous offences against his country which a Prime Minister can possibly commit." (Cheers.)

On the 22nd of May Mr. Gladstone's resolutions were carried by a majority of fifty-four, and there was no difficulty experienced during the remaining stages, until it came to the House of Lords, where the second reading was negatived on a division by 192 to 97.

In the early part of 1868, Mr. W. O'Sullivan, of Limerick, who has subsequently become a member of the House of Commons, was arrested on suspicion of being connected with the Fenian organisation, and many of his friends in England formed the opinion that he was unjustly suspected, and ought to be liberated. Mr. Bright was asked to intercede on his behalf, and, in reply, wrote:—

"I think it likely there are many cases of great hardship and injustice under the present system of arrests in Ireland."

He also promised to wait upon Lord Mayo, to try to induce him to liberate Mr. O'Sullivan. On the 26th of March, Mr. Bright wrote again, stating—

"That Lord Mayo, after consulting with the law officers, has ordered the liberation of Mr. O'Sullivan, on condition that he does not reside within the county of Limerick before the 1st of August next. This seems a strange condition, but I suppose it will not prevent his going within a few miles of home to live; and perhaps may enable him to pay some attention to his business."

The annual meeting of the Welsh National Reform Association was held in Liverpool on the 3rd of June, and Mr. Bright was one of the speakers, and said—

"That out of a population of six million persons in Ireland, 4,500,000 belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. Half a million belonged to the Protestant Episcopal Church, and about half a million to the Presbyterian Church. The census gave under 700,000 of Church Protestants, but this overstated the numbers. Now, if we belonged to these four and a half millions, and knew that this little Church of half a million was planted among us by those who had

conquered our fathers, if we knew also that this little Church was associated with everything that had been hostile to our national interests and national prosperity, and if we knew further that it absorbed incomes amounting to not less than £700,000 or £800,000 sterling per year, these incomes being derived from national property amounting to probably £13,000,000 or £14,000,000 sterling—I say that if we were of those four and a half millions, let me ask every man of you whether we should not feel that we had a just cause of complaint, and that there was a national grievance in our country that required to be speedily redressed. . . . Now, what is it we propose to do? So far as I am concerned, I should be sorry to join any political party that was about to do a real injury or a real injustice to any portion of the people. We propose—Mr. Gladstone in his resolution proposed—the House of Commons, by its great majority, has resolved—to place the Episcopal Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church in Ireland, in this position—a position familiar to you. You have been in this position for a long time; you know exactly its hardships, its grievances, its advantages, and its glorious successes. We propose to put the Protestant Episcopalians of Ireland in exactly the same position that the Welsh Free Churches are in now—in the position in which the Wesleyan Churches of Scotland are; and also, I may say, it is the same position in which all the Protestant Churches, the Episcopalians included, are in Canada, in the Australian colonies, and in the United States of North America. But we propose to give them this advantage, which you have never had, to leave them in possession of all the churches wherever they have a congregation that will keep them in repair, and of all the parsonage houses belonging to those churches where there are congregations who will support a minister.”

Mr. Bright in July, 1868, was the guest of Mr. Peabody at Castle Connel in Ireland, and on the 14th of that month he was invited to a public breakfast in the Limerick Athenæum.

“It is now twenty years since I was, the only time before this, in your city,” said Mr. Bright to his audience. “I can see—and I have heard much more than I have seen—that there is a considerable change in some respects for the better in Ireland during the last twenty years; but it is not at all to be wondered at. When I was here before, famine and pestilence had scarcely completed their melancholy duty. When I say duty, I regard famine and pestilence as instruments appointed by Providence to punish the ignorance, the folly, and the crimes of men. But since famine and pestilence in their fearful forms have ceased amongst you, there has been an emigration unexampled, I believe, from any modern nation, and in any modern time; and the result has been that the population of Ireland has been greatly thinned, and it is only reasonable to expect and to believe that there should be better and more constant employment for the population remaining here, and a higher rate of wages than in former times. If you recollect the contents of the report of the Devon Commission, which I think sat about the year 1845, you will remember that nearly one half the population of Ireland at that moment were in a condition of absolute pauperism. That is a thing which, happily, cannot be said now of such a large proportion of your people. . . . I am willing and anxious, if possible, to supplement the Act of Union by deeds of generosity and of justice, which shall really unite the three kingdoms. And I would offer to the Irish people the more durable and solid independence which they may possibly think is the portion of a great and prosperous empire, whose councils and whose examples would move the world to great and noble ends. . . . In travelling through this country, one may not accept the dictum of your poet, that this is the “First flower of the earth;” but, at any rate, I think a man cannot live in the valley of the Shannon without believing that it is one of the earth’s very fairest flowers. Your climate is genial, your people have at least as many virtues, so far as I know, as other people have, and even it is admitted that their failings lean rather to virtue’s side. But it is impossible not to feel that there hangs over the country something like a shadow of the curse of past wrongs, and that there are amongst you afflicting memories that will not sleep. What I would propose, if it were possible for me to dictate the policy of the Imperial Parliament towards Ireland, would be to undo—absolutely to undo—the terrible and

ecclesiastical arrangements maintained during the past two or three hundred years, though I would do all this without inflicting upon any living man the smallest act of injustice in connection with his personal interests in those territorial and ecclesiastical arrangements."

The general election approaching, Mr. Bright issued his address to his constituents on the 22nd August, 1868, and stated—

"I regard the question of the ballot as of first importance. Whether I look to the excessive cost of elections, or to the tumult which so often attends them, or to the unjust and cruel pressure which is so frequently brought to bear upon the less independent class of voters, I am persuaded that the true interest of the public and of freedom will be served by the adoption of the system of secret and free voting. It is in practice, and is highly valued, in almost every other country having representative institutions, and I regard it as absolutely necessary to a real representation of the United Kingdom. The foremost question for the new Parliament will be our treatment of Ireland. You know my views on the Irish Church Establishment and on the land question. In dealing with the Irish Establishment we are not promoting the spread of the Roman Catholic, or damaging the influence of the Protestant, religion. We do not touch religion at all. We deal only with the political institution, which has wholly failed to secure any good object, and which has succeeded only in weakening the loyalty and offending the sense of justice of the great majority of the Irish people. Our opponents speak of their zeal for Protestantism and their loyalty to the constitution. I prefer a Protestantism which is in alliance with Christian kindness and with justice, and my loyalty to the constitution leads me to wish for the hearty union of the three kingdoms in allegiance to the Crown. I believe that Christianity and the constitution will be alike strengthened in these Islands by the removal of the Irish Church Establishment."

Mr. Bright addressed a crowded meeting of his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 26th of October; Mr. J. S. Wright in the chair.

"Now, will you allow me for a moment to tell you what was the state of England exactly forty years ago?" remarked Mr. Bright. "If I had a blackboard here on the platform, as schoolmasters have in their schools, or if I had a large chart where I could point to all these things, you would take them in not only with the ear as I speak them, but with the eye as you would see them. In 1828 no Dissenter in England—how many Dissenters are there on this platform, in this meeting?—(cheers)—half the people at least who go to a place of worship on a Sunday are Dissenters—forty years ago not one of these Dissenters by law could hold any civil or military office in the State. He could not be mayor of Birmingham; he could not be an alderman; he could not be a member of the town council; he could not be a magistrate; he could not hold, I believe, a position of the rank of any officer in the army. There were many that did hold those offices, but they did it contrary to law, and every year a Bill of Indemnity was passed to excuse them for having broken the law. What was there besides, with regard to your fellow-countrymen, the Roman Catholics of the kingdom? Not one of these was permitted to sit in the House of Commons, although he was elected by any of the largest constituencies of the kingdom. ('Shame.') But not only were these members of the Catholic Church thus disqualified, but your great town itself, and the city of Manchester, and the town of Leeds, and the town of Sheffield, and many of the great towns, and all the boroughs of the metropolis of the kingdom, except the city of London, the borough of Southwark, and the city of Westminster, were totally without Parliamentary power. Where do you think all the members of Parliament came from in those days? I will tell you where forty-four of them came from. I have been lately, within the last month, spending some days in the county of Cornwall, a very charming county, with beautiful coast scenery, with an industrious, a frugal, an intelligent, and a noble-minded population; but the forty-four members who came to the House of Commons were not returned by the population, but for the most part by what were called

rotten boroughs. That was the state of things that existed at the time of which I have spoken. You know that as to municipal government there was scarcely any in England. Many boroughs had the form of municipal government, but they had scarcely any of the substance. You know that the question of popular education had never been taken up by the Government or Parliament of that day, and that nothing had been done by the legislature to redeem the great mass of our population from an ignorance which was degrading to us, and kept us also below many of the civilised nations of Europe. (Hear, hear.) At that time also, in our colonies, we had 800,000 negroes, in a state, apparently, of hopeless bondage, and at the same time, at home, we had monopolies that reduced the working classes themselves to a condition of bondage. You had a monopoly in corn, a monopoly in sugar, and a monopoly in many other things, which I need not particularise." (Hear, hear.)

On the 3rd of November, 1868, Mr. Bright was presented with the freedom of the city of Edinburgh. Mr. W. Chambers, the noted publisher, who at that time filled the office of Lord Provost, occupied the chair at the meeting.

"Now, more than thirty years ago," said Mr. Bright, "when I was very young indeed, in my beginning to think about public affairs, in reading the pure writings of John Milton, I found a passage which fixed itself in my mind. This passage time has never been able to take from my memory. He says, 'Yet true eloquence I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth.' And I have endeavoured, so far as I have had the opportunity of speaking in public, to abide by that wise and weighty saying. So far as I am able to examine myself, during the thirty years that I have been permitted to speak at meetings of my countrymen, I am not conscious that I have ever used an argument which I did not believe to be sound, or have stated anything as a fact which I did not believe to be true. I have endeavoured, further, always to abstain from speaking on subjects which I had not examined and well considered, and perhaps it is because I have endeavoured to attend to these rules that what I have said has met with some acceptance, and perhaps in some quarters has been influential with the country. As to the title of statesman, I may say here what I said many years ago in the House of Commons, that I have seen so much intrigue and ambition, so much selfishness and inconsistency in the character of many so-called statesmen, that I have always been rather anxious to disclaim the title. I have been content to describe myself as a simple citizen, who honestly examines such public questions as affect the public weal, and honestly offers his counsel to his countrymen. (Cheers.) . . . I am one of those who have never believed that there is anything very mysterious in the art or knowledge of politics; and that what we call statesmanship—honest statesmanship—is not an abstruse and difficult branch of knowledge. Most of us when we come to consider a public question are able to strip it of all the things which do not really belong to it and get at the pith and kernel of the matter. I think that our intellects are so much on a par, and that, as a whole, we are so anxious, and rightly so, that on almost all occasions we may be able to come to an early and wise agreement as to the course which the public should pursue. In the course of my political life there have been several great questions which have interested me, and on each of which I have been astonished that I found myself at variance with so many of my countrymen, and I have not been less delighted afterwards to find that, by-and-bye, we all seemed to agree; but unfortunately, the agreement came, occasionally too late, and when the misfortunes, which had been perhaps foretold, had already happened, and it was only after the misfortunes that we were able to agree as to what ought to have been done."

On the 5th of November, 1868, Mr. Bright was made an honorary member of the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce, the chairman, Mr. George Harrison, presiding. In the evening Mr. Bright addressed a meeting of the working class, and, in the course of a lengthy speech, he said:—

"Since I have taken a part in public affairs, the fact of the vast weight of poverty and ignorance that exists at the bottom of the social scale has been a burden

on my mind, and is so now. I have always hoped that the policy which I have advocated, and which has been accepted in principle, will tend gradually but greatly to relieve the pauperism and the suffering which we still see amongst the working classes of society. (Hear, hear.) I have no notion of a country being called prosperous and happy, or being in a satisfactory state, when such a condition of things exists. (Hear, hear.) You may have an historical monarch, decked out in the dazzling splendour of royalty; you may have an ancient nobility, settled in grand mansions and on great estates; you may have an ecclesiastical hierarchy, hiding with its worldly pomp that religion whose first virtue is humility; but, notwithstanding all this, the whole fabric may be rotten and doomed ultimately to fall, if the great mass of the people on whom it is supported is poor and suffering and degraded. (Cheers.) Is there no remedy for this state of things? If governments were just, if taxes were moderate and equitably imposed, if land were free, if schools were as prominent institutions in our landscapes and in our great towns as prisons and workhouses are, I suspect we should find the people gradually gaining more self-respect, that they would have much more hope of improvement for themselves and their families, that they would rise above, in thousands of cases, all temptation to intemperance, and that they would become generally—I say almost universally—more virtuous and more like what the subjects of a free state ought to be. (Hear, hear.) The solemn question as to the future condition of a considerable portion of the labouring classes in this country cannot be neglected. It must be known and remedied. It is the work upon which the new electoral body and the new Parliament will have to enter. It is a long way from Belgrave Square to Bethnal Green. It is not pleasant to contrast the palatial mansions of the rich with the dismal hovels of the poor—the profuse and costly luxuries of the wealthy with the squalid and hopeless misery of some millions of those who are below them. But I ask you, as I ask myself a thousand times, is it not possible that this mass of poverty and suffering may be reached and be raised, or taught to raise itself? What is there that man cannot do if he tries? The other day he descended to the mysterious depths of the ocean, and with an iron hand sought, and found, and grasped, and brought up to the surface the lost cable, and with it made two worlds into one. I ask, are his conquests confined to the realms of science? Is it not possible that another hand, not of iron, but of Christian justice and kindness, may be let down to moral depths even deeper than those the cable fathoms, to raise up from thence the sons and daughters of misery and the multitude who are ready to perish? (Cheers.) This is the great problem which is now before us. It is one which is not for statesmen only, not for preachers of the Gospel only—it is one which every man in the nation should attempt to solve. The nation is now in power, and if wisdom abide with power, the generation to follow may behold the glorious day of what we, in our time, with our best endeavours, can only hope to see the earliest dawn. (Cheers.)

A deputation of Birmingham gunmakers waited upon Mr. Bright on the 10th of November, 1868, with respect to the action of the Government in establishing gun manufactories at Enfield. The deputation expressed the opinion that the work could be as adequately and safely executed by private enterprise. Mr. Bright replied at some length, and stated that ever since he had been in Parliament, when it was possible to do anything, he had supported the views of Mr. Cobden, that the Government ought not to be allowed to manufacture for itself any articles which could be obtained from private producers. Touching on the military expenditure, he said:—

“There live upon that £26,000,000 so vast a body of men—men looking for better wages, better salaries, higher promotion, that they form necessarily a most powerful influence, acting constantly upon the executive, and against the interest of the taxpayer. And I can assure you that the House of Commons, hitherto, seems to be wholly incapable of contending with this power. In point of fact, many of those who have seats in the House are interested in this expenditure; and if you will

follow the manner in which this expenditure is determined on, and the estimates are proposed, you will see how difficult it is for three members for Birmingham, or for thirty, to make much difference in this matter. The heads of departments—the Horse Guards for the army, the Admiralty for the navy—bring forward certain proposals with regard to expenditure, which are laid before the Cabinet, but the public are never heard at the Horse Guards or at the Admiralty. Men are there who are certainly heard—men whose heads are filled from morning to night with the grandeur, the glory, and the extent of the services; but most of them do not appear to have any idea that it is of the slightest importance that money is spent or saved, for they do not seem to know that a tax taken from the people is so much taken from their comforts. . . . The Cabinet, as a whole, is disposed greatly to leave each particular department to the heads of that department, and we all know that in the House of Commons, with its mob of generals, and colonels, and admirals, and captains, and the friends of such, it is far more easy to work the Parliamentary machine by a lavish expenditure of money than it is to procure, or to promote, or to insist upon any due system of economy. They make things easy by what is called greasing the wheels. . . . What is wanted is an entirely new system, and I will, in a few sentences, tell you what that system ought to be. In future the formation of the estimates should no longer be left to be determined by the Admiralty, the War Office, or the Cabinet. There ought to be an honestly chosen committee of the House of Commons. The House pretends to hold the purse of the nation—it does so, indeed, but its own hand is always in it. Surely instead of having 650 gentlemen, who for the most part know nothing about the matter, to determine these claims, all the estimates should be referred to a fairly selected committee of the House of Commons, and that committee ought to go into the consideration of the whole matter, to hear opinions, to take evidence, and to make a report with regard to every important item in the estimates which it presents to the House. For the first ten or twelve years after I entered the House of Commons, I took great interest in the estimates. I sat very near Mr. Hume, and I did what I could to aid him in his efforts upon this subject; but I found out that it was all in vain. In fact, there is no greater delusion imaginable than that any single member of Parliament can make any sensible difference in the public expenditure.”

CHAPTER XLI.

MR. BRIGHT A CABINET MINISTER.

The General Election of 1868—Mr. Gladstone Premier—Mr. Bright made a Cabinet Minister—At Windsor—Mr. Gladstone's Bill for Disestablishing the Irish Church—A Free Breakfast Table—Illness of Mr. Bright—His Resignation from the Cabinet—Comments of the Press—The Queen's kind Offer—Presentation from Staffordshire to Mr. Bright—Recovery—Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

THE dissolution of Parliament took place in November, and on the 11th of the same month the electors were summoned to choose their representatives. The result was that the Liberals gained a majority of 120 in the new Parliament. The Ministers wisely decided, at a Cabinet meeting on the 1st of December, to resign at once. On Mr. Gladstone devolved the task of forming a new Administration. He offered a seat in the Cabinet to Mr. Bright, who at first declined, but ultimately consented, after much friendly and, at the same time, earnest discussion.

Mr. W. E. Gladstone, in his contribution to this work, states :—

"I remember that Mr. Bright told me the next day he had not slept a wink after it. It lasted from two to three hours, during the whole of which we were at close quarters. We were, however, completely united in spirit and aim, and were only debating the means. He sat in the same chair and place as he had occupied some months before at a meeting of the principal persons of the Liberal party, at which the resolution was taken to raise for good the question of the Irish Church Establishment and to fight it through. I am not sure that he was not the inventor of the word 'disestablish' on that occasion."

Very few members of Parliament have more fairly earned the title honourable in the national sense of the term, than Mr. Bright has done by the unbroken tenor of his speeches, and his spotless life. The records of Parliament present the names of few statesmen to whom Englishmen are more distinctly indebted for the practical extension of their freedom, and for the lasting improvement of their constitution; or for whom, in a wider sense, all men who value the principle of genuine freedom are bound to cherish and to express a more cordial gratitude. To many, however, the plain "John Bright, the burly, unscrupulous apostle of the people's welfare, was far more preferable than the title of Right Hon. John Bright." Still his name was a source of strength to the Government, for it was a common saying amongst his admirers, "He knows all that is going on, and if

he is satisfied, we are." Appearing before his constituents for re-election on the 21st December, 1868, Mr. Bright informed them that—

"Mr. Gladstone, soon after he proceeded to the formation of his Administration, asked me to join him in the Government. (Loud cheers.) I have reason to know that he made that proposition with the cordial and gracious acquiescence of Her Majesty the Queen. (Loud and prolonged cheering.) As you know, I had very strong reasons for refusing to change my seat and place in the House of Commons. The arguments which were used to induce me to change that opinion were arguments based entirely upon what was considered best for the interests of the great Liberal party and for the public service. (Cheers.) And I was obliged to admit, looking at them from that point of view, that they were not easily to be answered. On the other hand, I had to offer arguments which were more of a private and personal nature, which I also believed to be unanswerable. But when the private and the personal came to be weighed against the apparent public reasons—(cheers)—then the private and the personal yielded to the public reasons—(loud cheers)—and I surrendered my inclination, and I may say also my judgment, to the opinions and to the judgment of my friends. (Cheers.) Mr. Gladstone told me that he did not wish me to accept of any office that was inferior in importance or in emolument to any office held by any one of his colleagues—(cheers)—and he proposed that I should accept the position of Secretary of State for India. (Cheers.) Now, very many of my friends have urged in past times that I should undertake that office—(cheers)—and not a few have expressed regret that I have not accepted it. (Hear, hear.) In a sentence, therefore, I think it right to explain why I took the course which led to my declining that important post. You know that twelve years ago, just before I came here, that I suffered from an entire breakdown of my health, which cut me off from public labours for about two years. The Indian department, I believe, is one of very heavy work, and I felt I was not justified in accepting it, unless there were some great probability of some useful result which could not be accomplished under any chief of that office. (Hear, hear.) Now, my own opinion is that the views I have expressed in times passed—especially in the year 1858, when the Indian Government Bill was passing through Parliament—that those views are sound, and that the time will come when it will be necessary to apply them to the government of India; but I believe that public opinion is not yet sufficiently advanced to allow us to adopt them; and that, if I had taken that office, I should have found myself unable to carry into execution the principles which I believe to be sound with regard to Indian government. (Hear, hear.) At the same time, I will confess freely that it did not appear seemly for me—I think I should have felt that I was in my wrong place, with the views which I have held from my youth upwards—if I had connected myself distinctly with the direction of the great military department of the Indian Government. (Hear, and cheers.) Looking, therefore, at these points, I felt it my duty to decline the proposition; and I said, very distinctly, that if I am to accept any seat in this Government, I should prefer to take the office of President of the Board of Trade. (Cheers.) In that office, perhaps, I may do a little good, and perhaps I may prevent some harm. (Laughter and cheers.) At least it will not, I hope, so burden me that I may be unable to take some reasonable part in the discussion of the great questions which must come very speedily before the House of Commons. (Hear, hear.) Having said this much, then, I must ask you to consider that, although I stand before you in a new character, yet I have not the smallest intention of getting rid of my old one. (Cheers.) I hope the time has arrived in this country—it has only recently arrived—when a man may, perhaps without difficulty, act as an honest Minister of the Crown, and at the same time as an honest and devoted servant and counsellor of the people. (Cheers.) . . . There is a charming story contained in a single verse of the Old Testament, which has often struck me as one of great beauty. Many of you will recollect that the prophet, journeying to and fro, was very hospitably entertained by what is termed in the Bible a Shunammite woman. In return for her hospitality he wished to make her some amends, and he called her to him and asked her what there was that he should do for her. 'Shall I speak for thee to the king,' he said, 'or to the captain of the host?' Now, it has always appeared to me that the Shunammite woman returned a great answer. She replied in declining the prophet's offer, 'I dwell among mine

own people.' (Great applause.) When the question was put to me whether I would step into the position in which I now find myself, the answer from my heart was the same—I wish to dwell among my own people. (Great applause.) Happily the time may have come—I trust it has come—when in this country an honest man may enter the service of the Crown—(great applause)—and at the same time not feel it in any degree necessary to dissociate himself from his own people. (Great applause.) Some partial friends of mine have said that I have earned all this by my long services in the popular cause. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) They know not what they say. (Laughter.) They would add labour to labour, and would compensate a life of service by a doubled responsibility. I am sensible of the duty which is imposed upon me as a Minister of the Crown. It is my duty faithfully to perform that which belongs to such a position, but I have not less faithfully to act as becomes an honest representative of the people." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright's colleagues in the Cabinet were Lord Hatherley as Lord Chancellor; Earl de Grey, Lord President of the Council; Earl of Kimberley, Lord Privy Seal; Mr. Lowe, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Mr. Bruce, Home Secretary; Earl of Clarendon, Foreign Secretary; Earl Granville, Colonial Secretary; Mr. Cardwell, War Secretary; Duke of Argyll, Indian Secretary; Lord Dufferin, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; the Marquis of Hartington, Postmaster-General; Mr. Childers, First Lord of the Admiralty; Earl Spencer, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland; Mr. Chichester Fortescue, Chief Secretary for Ireland; and Mr. A. H. Layard, Woods and Forests.

When Mr. Bright went to Windsor, to go through the ceremony of taking the oath of office, Her Majesty showed her delicate consideration for the great commoner in a very marked way. She requested Mr. Helps, the clerk to the Privy Council, to assure Mr. Bright, if it was more agreeable to his feelings to omit the ceremony of kneeling he was quite at liberty to do so. Mr. Bright availed himself of this considerate permission, and was very kindly and cordially received by Her Majesty. It was afterwards intimated to Mr. Bright that Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal of Prussia had expressed a desire that Mr. Bright should be presented to her. She herself, she said, had read his speeches, and she was very pleased to see him. Mr. Bright replied in graceful terms, and said if Her Royal Highness would permit him he would tell her what the late Mr. Buchanan, the American Minister, when last in London, said of her to him, "that wherever Her Royal Highness went, she shed sunshine over all her path." Mr. Bright was very much struck with the graceful, animated manners and genial greeting he had the honour to receive from Her Royal Highness, and the young ladies of the Court tell with curious interest of the meeting between Her Royal Highness and the great Quaker courtier. Mr. Bright became as famous in royal circles as his illustrious predecessor, William Penn.

Mr. Gladstone, in supplementing our account of this interesting interview, tells us that :

"The rules of costume on such occasions have been suspended or modified since the death of the Prince Consort. It was at court or levées that Mr. Bright availed himself of Her Majesty's gracious permission, and appeared in a velvet dress with trousers. The acceptance of office was at Windsor, in a small room in which business is transacted standing. I remember being struck with the feeling that there was more loyalty, I will even say more reverence, expressed in Mr. Bright's face than would have served many a man to go through the kneeling and the kissing of hands."

Mr. Bright made his first official reply as President of the Board of Trade on the 18th of February, 1869, and performed his duties very naturally ; but it was certainly very strange to listen to him making a dry departmental statement. Great was the curiosity on the part of the members to witness how he executed the duties, and the impression made was favourable.

Mr. Gladstone, on the 1st of March, 1869, introduced his Bill for the disestablishment and partial disendowment of the Irish Church, in a very eloquent speech. On the resumed debate, on the 19th of March, Mr. Bright delivered a masterly speech :—

"It is too late to-night to go into the question of the surplus," said Mr. Bright. "There is one thing that I should say about it—and I say it in the hearing of my hon. and learned friend (Sir Roundell Palmer), who is understood to take a different view on this question from some on this side. John Wycliffe, as the House knows, lived five hundred years ago ; he was born in the town of Richmond ; and he was, perhaps, the first and greatest of the English Reformers. John Wycliffe was obliged to consider this question as to what should be done with regard to religious endowments ; and he said, 'If Churches make bad use of their endowments, princes are bound to take them away from them.' It is not too much for us to say that if endowments are found to be mischievous, Parliament may put them to other uses. I sometimes wonder how it is that in five hundred years we make so little progress on some subjects. That was the opinion of Wycliffe in the fourteenth century, and we are now discussing the same subject in this House ; and right hon. and hon. and learned gentlemen get up in this House and denounce as almost sacrilege and spoliation any attempt on the part of the Imperial Parliament to deal with the endowments of the State Church in Ireland. And as to the uses to which these endowments are put, if I were particular on the point as to the sacred nature of the endowments, I should even then be satisfied with the propositions in this Bill—for, after all, I hope it is not far from Christianity to charity ; and we know that the Divine Founder of our faith has left much more of the doings of a compassionate and loving heart than He has of dogma. (Hear, hear.) I am not able to give the chapter or the verse, the page or the column ; but what has always struck me most in reading the narratives of the Gospel is how much of kindness and how much of compassion there was, and how much also there was of dealing kindly with all that were sick, all that were suffering. Do you think it will be a misappropriation of the surplus funds of this great Establishment to apply them to some objects such as those described in the Bill ? Do you not think that from the charitable dealing with these matters even a sweeter incense may arise than when these vast funds are applied to maintain three times the number of clergy with which they are connected ? (Hear, hear.) We can do little, it is true. We cannot relume the extinguished lamp of reason. We cannot make the deaf to hear. We cannot make the dumb to speak. It is not given to us

'From the thick film to purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeballs pour the day ;'

but at least we can lessen the load of affliction, and we can make life more tolerable to vast numbers who suffer. (Loud cheers.) Sir, when I look at this great measure—and I can assure the House I have looked at it much more than the majority of hon. and right hon. members opposite, because I have seen it grow from line to line, and from clause to clause, and have watched its growth and its completion with a great and increasing interest—I say when I look at this measure I look on it as tending to a more true and solid union between Ireland and Great Britain; I see it giving tranquillity to our people—('Oh, oh,' from the Opposition, followed by Ministerial cheers)—when you have a better remedy I at least will fairly consider it—(cheers)—I say I see this measure giving tranquillity to our people, greater strength to the realm, and adding a new lustre and a new dignity to the Crown. (Hear, hear.) I dare claim for this Bill the support of all thoughtful and good people within the bounds of the British Empire, and I cannot doubt that in its early and great results it will have the blessing of the Supreme; for I believe it to be founded on those principles of justice and mercy which are the glorious attributes of His eternal reign." (Loud cheers.)

The cheers, when Mr. Bright sat down, were most enthusiastic, and repeated again and again from both sides of the House. All present seemed to yield unreservedly to the influence of the orator, as in softened accents, and with the great tenderness of a strong man, he touched, amidst the most hushed silence, the softer passions and emotions. The peroration swept on, gathering grandeur, and culminating in a magnificent invocation to the Divine Ruler. The second reading of the Bill was carried by a majority of 118, and the third reading by 114. In the committee in the House of Lords numerous changes were made in the Bill. Some of the amendments were accepted by the Government and the House of Commons, and others rejected. The Bill was accordingly sent back to the House of Lords on the evening of the 20th of July, and after undergoing some slight alterations passed into law.

Before the Bill was disposed of by the House of Lords, Mr. Bright gave the Members of the upper chamber a warning in a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Association, and it caused considerable excitement amongst the Peers, and had the desired effect.

"I must ask my friends to excuse me if I am unable to accept their invitation for the meeting on Monday next," wrote Mr. Bright. "The Lords are not very wise, but there is sometimes profit to the people even in their innovations. If they should delay the passing of the Irish Church Bill for three months, they will stimulate discussion on important questions, which, but for their infatuation, might have slumbered for many years. It is possible that a good many people may ask what is the special value of a constitution which gives a majority of 100 in one House for a given policy, and a majority of 100 in another House against it. I may be asked also why the Crown, through its Ministers in the House of Commons, should be found in harmony with the nation, while the Lords are generally in direct opposition to it. Instead of doing a little childish tinkering about life peerages, it would be well if the Peers could bring themselves on a line with the opinions and necessities of our day. In harmony with the nation, they may go on for a long time; but, throwing themselves athwart its course, they may meet with accidents not pleasant for them to think of. But there are not a few good and wise men among the Peers, and we will hope their counsels may prevail."

The Corporation of Trinity House entertained the Prince of Wales and other members of the Royal family, Her Majesty's Ministers, and many other persons of distinction, at dinner, in their hall on Tower Hill, London, on the 3rd of July. The Prince, in the absence of the Duke of Edinburgh, the Master of the Corporation, presided on the occasion, and was supported right and left by Prince Arthur, Prince Christian, the Prince of Teck, and Prince Edward of Saxe-Weimar, Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bruce, Mr. Lowe, Mr. Bright, Mr. Cardwell, the Lord Chief-Justice Cockburn, Mr. Disraeli, Sir John Pakington, and several other Members of Parliament. During the evening, Lord Taunton proposed "The Maritime and Commercial Interests of the Country, and the Health of the President of the Board of Trade." (Cheers.) Mr. Bright, during his speech, remarked :—

"I have sometimes imagined what a scene would be presented if any man could from a height survey all the land and waters of the globe. He would see men in every land preparing something to find its way to this country. And if he could look over the waters he would see ships driven either by the winds, or what is more potent, by steam, bringing from thousands of sources the produce of the industry of man in every country of the world to the shores of this country, to supply the necessities, comforts, and luxuries of the various classes of our people. . . . For myself, I never could comprehend why such great navies should be kept up. I would forego all the luxuries of life rather than be tempted to obtain them by crossing the sea. Such are the perils of the deep that I confess I never hear the wind howling, or see the storm raging, or the clouds drifting, but I think of my countrymen on stormy seas. Therefore, I have a strong sympathy with the lifeboat system, and no less sympathy with the great and benign objects of this corporation. (Hear.) I hope it may so come up with the requirement of the times, and keep up with them, that it will never require to be either disendowed or disestablished. (Laughter.) The subject to which I have referred leads me to hope that the industry of our country may be sustained, that its commerce may be more and more widely diffused, that with an economical Government—it is long since we had one—(laughter)—that with an economical Government, and the efforts that I trust will before long be made to support a general and universal education among our people, they may grow in all that is good, and that our country, great and glorious as she is, is destined for long generations and centuries to hold her place among the nations." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright again addressed his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 11th of January, 1870. The Mayor presided. In speaking of Ireland, Mr. Bright said :—

"In conjunction with her representatives, we have already given to Ireland free churches and free schools—(loud cheers)—and I hope before long we shall give to Irishmen free land and a free vote. (Loud and prolonged applause.) Ireland lies adjacent to the most populous and wealthy island of the world. We can buy from her all she wishes to sell, and at a higher price than any other nation can give; and we can sell her all she wishes to buy at a lower price than any other nation will take. (Hear.) We propose—we may fail, but I hope not—good efforts in regard to legislation, honest efforts very often succeed—we propose a new conquest of Ireland, without confiscation, and without blood—(hear, hear, and applause)—with only that holy weapon, a frank and generous justice—(cheers)—which is everywhere potent to bring together nations which have been long separated by oppression and by neglect. (Loud cheers.) Now, from this new policy we hope for great changes in Ireland

—not that Ireland is to be made a paradise, but that Ireland should be greatly improved. (Applause.) It may be, possibly it is or will seem like, the language of great exaggeration if I quote the lines of Pope, in one of the most exquisite poems in our language:—

‘All crimes shall cease, and ancient fraud shall fail;
Returning Justice lift aloft her scale;
Peace o’er the world her olive-wand extend;
And white-robed Innocence from heaven descend.’

(Loud cheers.) This may appear the language of great exaggeration; but if we are able to suppress conspiracy; if we can abolish agrarian crime; if we can unbar prison doors—(cheers)—if we can reduce all excess of military force; if we can make Ireland as tranquil as England and Scotland now are—(cheers)—then at least I think we may have done something to justify the wisdom and the statesmanship of our time. (Loud cheers.) But there are other questions, and two of them I will touch as briefly as I can. . . . I have said over and over again, hundreds of times in private, and many times in public, that I thought three years would not elapse, after the election of a household suffrage Parliament, without our having a great and general measure of national education. (Cheers.) With regard to my particular views upon it, they were stated rather at length in a meeting that I addressed just previous to the general election. (Hear.) One thing that is most gratifying now is this, that there seems a general tendency to some arrangement, which, perhaps, no party will consider unsatisfactory. (Cheers.) We are agreed upon this. Whether speakers or writers belong to one section or the other, all are agreed upon this, that there must be some means of instruction for all, offered to all the children of the people. (‘No compulsion,’ and a laugh.) We are unanimous upon that. We are not unanimous upon the manner, but the discussion which is going on, in my opinion, is producing that kind of unanimity out of which it is possible to carry a measure. (Hear, hear.) Whether the schools shall be free, or whether there shall be any payment; whether there shall be any compulsion, and, if so, whether it shall be of this kind or that—these are points which are being sifted throughout the public discussion which is going on; and, of course, nobody learns more from public discussion than a member of Her Majesty’s Government. (Applause and laughter.) . . . Well, a free breakfast table is by no means an impossible thing. (Cheers.) I have not been in the habit of recommending or proposing things that are impossible. (Great cheering.) If we could get rid of taxes upon articles which come to our breakfast table we should have a free country, as far as our ports and customs duties go, with the exception of things which many people think not necessary, and injurious, meaning spirits, wines, and tobacco. What a magnificent thing it would be if every Englishman, whenever he trod the world over, could say to all the world, send everything which all mankind agree to be useful and beneficial to the human race to any port in England, and they will be received there without the payment of a farthing of duty. (Cheers.) I am speaking now, bear in mind, as your representative. (Great laughter and cheers.) I am not speaking in any other capacity. (Renewed laughter and cheers.) I am making no promises; I am only telling you what I believe to be possible, and what the people in the end may get—(cheers)—if they will examine it, comprehend it, make up their minds in its favour, and let Parliament and the Government know what it is they are thinking about.” (Cheers.)

The free breakfast table, however, might be laid out easier than at first imagined. For instance, under Protection, in 1839, the amount of tea consumed per head of the population was 11lb. 13oz.; under Free-trade it was 3lbs. 8oz. Under Protection 24lbs. of sugar were consumed per head; under Free-trade 39½lbs. Under Protection, in 1844, tea was 5s. per lb.; in 1868 it was just half this sum. Under Protection we had coffee for which we paid 1s. 8d. per lb.; now we have the same article at 1s. Under Protection, in 1842, sugar was 9d. per lb.; it is now 4½d. The free breakfast table is still looming in the distance.

A deputation waited upon Mr. Bright in January for the purpose of persuading him to use his influence in procuring some mitigation in the sentences passed on the Fenian prisoners :—

“Though I have been one who has always spoken strongly in favour of changes,” said Mr. Bright, in reply, “and changes which we showed by demonstration were right to be made, still, for all that, I am bound to say that I know no greater enemy to our country than the man who attempts by force of arms to disturb the public peace, and to break down the authority of the laws. Least of all are those to be excused who, being in a country to which they have emigrated, and thereby escaped from what they supposed to be the tyranny and oppression here, are free to do what they please, yet conspire against our common country. I cannot see that any kind of allowance is to be made for such persons.”

On the very eve of the meeting of Parliament, in February, 1870, while in London, Mr. Bright suffered severely from exhaustion, the result of mental labour, and writing to Mr. Gladstone, he stated :—

“I cannot tell you how much I am disappointed at being absent from the meeting of Parliament, but I have distinct warnings of an attack of something like that from which I suffered fourteen years ago, and I dare not disregard them. I am quite unable to work, and must leave London for a time. I regret deeply that I cannot be at your side to vote and plead for the Irish Land Bill. . . . I think it a wise, just, and comprehensive measure, and I hope the moderation and patriotism of Parliament will enable it soon to become law.”

The quiet and rest produced a favourable effect upon Mr. Bright's health, and by the advice of his physicians he abstained from everything tending to excitement. Earl Granville, while in attendance on Her Majesty at Balmoral, received a letter from Mr. Bright in which he stated that his recovery was hopeful. The noble Earl communicated the news to Her Majesty, who desired Earl Granville at once to telegraph to Mr. Bright, “that if he thought it prudent in regard to his health, she hoped he would come and spend two or three days in retirement at Balmoral.” Mr. Bright was prevented accepting the kind offer on account of the inevitable excitement attendant upon such a visit. Mr. Bright was very much benefited by a stay of six months at Llandudno, and on the 28th of November he arrived at his residence in Rochdale. In December he resigned the office of President of the Board of Trade, on account of not feeling himself sufficiently recovered to take part in the preliminary deliberations to prepare the work for the session. The wish of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues, warmly expressed from time to time, had alone withheld Mr. Bright from resigning before, but he thought it was necessary for the complete recovery of his health.

The London Press thus commented on the event :—The *Times* stated that he had lavished the best energies of a singularly fine intellect for the benefit of his country, and he

had done so at a grievous personal sacrifice; but he might be assured that few public men have been followed into retirement by more earnest good wishes from all classes of their countrymen. The *Morning Post* thought there was probably not a man in the country, be his politics what they might, who would not receive the intelligence with the greatest concern and regret. The *Daily Telegraph* stated that his resignation would be keenly felt throughout the country. No name would ever go more straight to the Irish heart than that of John Bright, and his name would remain as that of one of the greatest orators who ever adorned the House of Commons. The *Daily News* was of opinion that Englishmen, without distinction of party, would share regret at Mr. Bright's resignation. The *London Figaro*: "We understand—and have much pleasure in making the announcement—that Her Majesty not only expressed to the Premier her sincere regret in accepting the resignation of the President of the Board of Trade, but has also written to Mr. Bright in the most gracious and cordial terms. Her Majesty's wish that the health of Mr. Bright will speedily be restored, and that he may be able for many years to devote his talents to the service of the country, will find a general response. This mark of the Sovereign's regard will be deeply gratifying to the right honourable gentleman, whose zeal for popular rights has always been allied with a fervent attachment to the Queen."

In June, 1871, Mr. Bright spent a few days with Mr. Bass, M.P., at his shooting lodge, Glen Tulchan Lodge; he also visited Invershin, and thence to Dingwall, Inverness, Kelso, Melrose, and returned home to Rochdale, much improved, and universal was the wish that his health would be completely restored.

Mr. Gladstone introduced an Irish Land Bill on the 15th of February, 1870. The Bill would reverse the present presumption of law, he explained, and would presume all improvements to be the property of the tenant, and it would be for the landlord to prove the contrary. Retrospective improvements would be included, but only so far back as twenty years, except in the case of permanent buildings and reclamations of lands. As to holdings under lease, any owner might exempt his lands from the custom, always excepting the Ulster custom, which would be legalised, and from the scale of damages, by giving to his tenants a lease for thirty-one years, provided that the lease were approved by the Court, and gave the tenant at the close of it a right to compensation for manures, permanent buildings, and reclamation of land. After several amendments by the House of Lords it received the Royal assent on the 1st of August.

The "Purchase clause" of this Act was suggested by Mr. Bright to the Cabinet; but the Irish executive's suggestions were chiefly adopted in framing the measure, which made the "Bright clauses" only partially successful, and delayed desired improvements in the land laws of Ireland.

In January, 1872, at his residence in Rochdale, Mr. Bright wrote the following letter to The O'Donoghue:—

"It is said that some persons engaged in the canvass of the county of Kerry have spoken of me as an advocate of what is termed Home Rule in Ireland. I hope no one has ventured to say anything so absurd and untrue. If it has been said by any one of any authority in the county I shall be glad if you will contradict it. To have two representative legislative assemblies or Parliaments in the United Kingdom would, in my opinion, be an intolerable mischief; and I think no sensible man can wish for two within the limits of the present United Kingdom who does not wish the United Kingdom to become two or more nations, entirely separated from each other. Excuse me for troubling you with this. It is no duty of mine to interfere in your contest, but I do not wish to be misrepresented."

A meeting of leading working men of London was held at Bolt Court on the 13th of February to consider the propriety of presenting a congratulatory address to Mr. John Bright, on his restoration to health and return to public life. A letter was afterwards addressed to the right hon. gentleman, asking whether he would consent to receive their address, and to fix the time and mode of its presentation. Mr. Bright replied from Rochdale on the 19th February:—

"My dear Sir,—I desire to thank your friends and yourself for the resolution of which you have sent me a copy; but I am puzzled as to the reply I should make to your kind and flattering proposal. I am not going up to London to attend Parliament immediately, although it is a great disappointment to me to be so long absent from the duties which I owe to my constituents; but I know well that it is far better for me to give myself a little more time than to plunge into the turmoil of public life before I am well enough to encounter it. I must ask you to let the matter rest for a time. I cannot object to receive your address, so kindly intended and so complimentary; but I should prefer a postponement of it to some period which may be better for me, and perhaps not less convenient for those who may wish to see me in connection with it. I beg you will convey my thanks to those with whom you are associated for the kindness they intend to show me. I am very sensible of the value of their goodwill and friendship."

Mr. Bright left Rochdale for London on the 9th of April, and the following day he had a long interview with Mr. Gladstone. On the 11th of the same month he entered the House of Commons for the first time after his illness, and with the view of avoiding any public demonstration, he attended before the commencement of the sitting and the arrival of the Speaker for prayers. As members came in they, without distinction of party, gathered round the right hon. gentleman, and greeted him with great cordiality. For some time Mr. Bright held a kind of levée, group after group forming about him. The right hon. gentle-

man afterwards took his old place at the upper corner of the second bench below the gangway, and remained there until prayers had been said. After a short conversation with the Speaker he left the House. He also visited the Reform Club, where he was most heartily received. Traces of the trying illness through which he had passed were noticeable. His hair, which before his illness was dark or grizzled, and abundant, had become perfectly white, imparting, together with his florid complexion, a venerable appearance.

A gentleman who had been told that the English Republicans would select Mr. Bright as their first president, wrote to ask the right hon. gentleman if he would accept the post, and received the following reply:—

“ Rochdale, April 7th, 1872. Dear Sir,—Your Republican friend must not be a very desperate character if he proposes to make me his first president, though I doubt if he can be a friend of mine. As to *opinions* on the question of Monarchy or Republicanism, I hope and believe it will be a long time before we are asked to give our opinion; our ancestors decided the matter a good while since, and I would suggest that you and I should leave any further decision to our posterity. Now, from your letter I conclude you are willing to do this; and I can assure you I am not less willing.”

The inhabitants of the Potteries conceived of a local presentation to Mr. Bright, and delicately carried it out. It took the form of a cabinet and collection of ceramic art. The cabinet was designed by Mr. F. W. Moody, of South Kensington, in the style of the time of Louis XVI., and was made of walnut. It is divided into two compartments, the upper, which is enclosed, being filled with vases and other examples of the art of industry of the district in its highest form—the productions of the eminent firms of Wedgwood, Minton, and Copeland. On the outer leaf of the cabinet are two of Copeland's finest statuettes in Parian, “Chastity” and “St. Filomena;” and three large majolica vases, by Wedgwood, occupy the lower compartment, which is open. Several of the objects had been manufactured specially for the testimonial, and the decorations of one of the choicest pieces are emblematic of Mr. Bright's career and services. There is an inscription on the top of the cabinet as follows:—“To the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P., whose foresight, eloquence, and faithful character, have greatly contributed to his country's prosperity, these specimens of ceramic art are presented by admirers in the Staffordshire Potteries.” A deputation of ten gentlemen was entrusted with the presentation of the cabinet and its valuable contents. These were Mr. Thomas Pidduck (ex-Mayor of Hanley, and chairman of the central committee); Mr. W. Furnival, Hanley, treasurer;

Mr. J. R. Cooke, Hanley, honorary secretary ; Mr. Taylor Ashworth and Mr. J. L. Cherry, Hanley ; Mr. W. Woodall, chief bailiff of Burslem ; Mr. Mayor, Longton ; Mr. J. Clark and Mr. John Peak, Tunstall ; and Mr. C. Dickinson, Stoke. The deputation reached Mr. Bright's residence about half-past twelve on the 12th of July, 1872, and was conducted to the drawing-room, where the cabinet had previously been set up and its contents displayed. There were also present in the room the Mayor of Rochdale (Mr. Alderman Shawcross), the ex-Mayor (Mr. Alderman Ashworth), Mr. Thomas Bright, Mr. Alderman Heape, Mr. Oliver Ormerod, Mr. Frank Bright (nephew of Mr. Bright), and Mr. William Bright (his son). Mrs. Bright and several other ladies were also present. Mr. Bright on entering the room was cordially welcomed, and privately introduced to several members of the deputation by Mr. Alderman G. L. Ashworth, of Rochdale.

Mr. Pidduck made the presentation, and Mr. Bright, in the course of his speech, in reply, said :—

"I assume, therefore, as I may assume from your kind address, that my public course and labours have met generally—not minutely in all cases, probably, but generally—with the consent and approval of those whom you represent. (Hear, hear.) At the same time I am deeply touched with the consideration of the circumstances under which, and the time when, this gift is made. The idea was not formed when I was actively engaged before the public, either as a member of Parliament or as a member of an Administration. I had not returned with friends and associates from any fresh political success. On the contrary, I was suffering from severe and protracted illness. It was at a time when it was not unlikely that I should never again return to public life. I was enfeebled and prostrated to an extent known only to my own family, and at that time your kindness and friendship were awakened, and you conceived the idea of doing me this honour, and marking your approbation by this gift. I think, therefore, that more than on ordinary occasions I have reason to feel deeply grateful to you for the kindness you have manifested to me. . . . Let us look for a moment, and only for a moment, at the great change which thirty years have made. There are countries which have gone through strange and sanguinary revolutions, and have not been able to make changes so wise and so wholly satisfactory. If those changes had not been made—I will undertake to say that if the Corn Laws had been maintained, if there had been a power which could have maintained them in their unrestricted and cruel character, nothing less than anarchy and insurrection could have followed :—

‘For men will break in their sublime despair
The bonds which nature can no longer bear.’

Yet all this has been done in this country with scarcely a single hour's riot, and without, so far as I remember, the sacrifice of a single drop of blood. I suppose there is yet a party in this country which complains of everything that we have said, and nearly everything that we have done. They have obstructed everything, they have contested every point, and they appear to be so ignorant and incapable of discussing these questions and considering them, that they may be said to be absolutely incurable. That party still appeals, in all its ancient audacity, to the support of the people. I think about the only consolation we have—and it is one dictated by Christian charity—is that they may partake, opponents though they have been—partake fully of the good things which we have provided for them ; for as the sun shines and the rain descends alike on just and unjust, so the blessings of a wise and beneficent legislation are participated in, not more fully by those who have promoted it than by those who have pertinaciously obstructed it."

Mr. Gladstone reconstructed his Cabinet in August, 1873, and Mr. Bright consented to succeed Mr. Childers as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He submitted himself to his constituents for re-election, and was returned unopposed.

On the evening of the 22nd of October, 1873, Mr. Bright met his constituents in Bingley Hall, Birmingham, which has an immense breadth of floor space, covering about an acre of ground, as the Town Hall was not large enough for the immense gathering. Galleries had been erected on each side, and in the dim distance, at the farther end of the immense hall, a gallery was devoted to the ladies. Early in the day the apartments in the hotels were engaged by strangers, many of whom had travelled hundreds of miles, and later comers had great difficulty in procuring accommodation for the night. The gathering was not purely political, for Mr. Bright was regarded as a friend by politicians of all shades. Four years' silence and almost complete retirement from public life had increased the anxiety to listen to his eloquence once more, and receive instruction. The hall was quite full at seven o'clock, and the turned-up faces of the mass of people in the body of the hall looked somewhat terrible, on account of their numbers, there being present about 15,000 persons. The presence of sixty representatives of the press of England, Scotland, Ireland, and the United States, testified to the interest that was taken in the event. Among those on the platform were the Right Hon. H. Childers, M.P., Mr. G. Dixon, M.P., Mr. Watkin Williams, M.P., Mr. Shaw Lefevre, M.P., Mr. James Howard, M.P., Mr. Duncan M'Laren, M.P., and Mrs. M'Laren, Hon. G. C. Lyttelton, M.P., Mr. Charles Reed, M.P., Mr. E. M. Richards, M.P., Mr. J. J. Colman, M.P., Mr. A. Brogden, M.P., Mr. D. C. Heron, M.P., Sir Thomas Bazley, Bart., M.P., Mr. Alderman Carter, M.P., Mr. H. B. Samuelson, M.P., the Town Clerk of Birmingham, the Recorder of Birmingham, Mr. J. Albert Bright (Mr. John Bright's eldest son), Hon. Chandos Leigh, Hon. Lyulph Stanley, Rev. W. H. Blamire, vicar of St. James's, Over Darwen, and representatives from the following and numerous other associations:—The Blackburn Reform Club, West Cheshire Liberal Association, National Reform Union (Manchester), Leeds Liberal Association, Salford Liberal Association (Pendleton branch), Cavendish Reform Club (Blackburn), National Amalgamated Society of Brassworkers (Birmingham), Birmingham Law Society, Liberal Registration Association (East Worcestershire), Leigh Reform Union, Bury Liberal Association, Wolverhampton Liberal Association, Burnley (Lan-

cashire) Liberal Association, Wrexham and Denbigh (North Wales) Liberal Association, Ledbury Liberal Association Reform Club, Todmorden Reform Club, London Reform Club, Manchester Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control, Liberal Club (Coventry), Marsden Liberal Association (near Huddersfield), Huddersfield Liberal Association, Manchester and Burnley Liberal Club, Kendal Liberal Reform Association, National Agricultural Labourers' Union.

At twenty five minutes past seven Mr. Bright appeared, and every man rose and gave him a hearty welcome, for the cheering that burst forth made the roof of the hall ring again; the audience could scarcely be seen from the platform for the waving of hats and handkerchiefs. Mr. Bright's lips quivered, his cheek flushed, yet he did not, even by the slightest bow, acknowledge the enthusiastic greeting; but it could be plainly seen that he was overjoyed by the reception.

The Mayor presided, and Mr. J. S. Wright moved a resolution of congratulation to Mr. Bright on the recovery of his health, and his ability to resume the labours of statesmanship. Mr. J. Chamberlain seconded the resolution, which was carried unanimously. When Mr. Bright rose to speak, the hearty cheering was renewed and prolonged.

Silence being restored, every face was turned to the spot where Mr. Bright stood alone, and the vast crowd waited expectantly. There was some fear that he was about to be inaudible to all but those in the immediate neighbourhood of the platform; but as he proceeded he gained power, and ere long his voice had all its wonted volume and richness, and

'There was a melody in every tone.'

He spoke for one hour and a quarter. His allusion to his illness was received with the warmth of sympathy.

"Standing here, after these five years," remarked Mr. Bright, "it is impossible that one should not look back a little at what has happened—not with the view of reading or speaking of a catalogue of measures that have been passed, or with the view of entering into enthusiastic laudation of the Administration which has existed, but it is worth our while to observe what are the great principles that during the last five years have been adopted and fixed irrevocably in the policy and legislation of England by consent of Parliament and by the acknowledged consent of the country. I say that the five years are five memorable years; and if the Administration were to perish to-day the works of the Administration would live, and they would bear comparison with those of any Government which has ever preceded it. (Cheers.) The policy of the Liberal party is known. It is before the public; it is not concealed; it is no mystery. What is the policy of the opposition? (Laughter, and cries of 'None.') We were told the other day that the leader of the Opposition was in 'a state of strict seclusion,' and but for that strange and unfortunate epistolary outburst we should have had no idea of the desperate state of mind in which he has been. (Laughter and cheers.) But still, if we ask for the policy of the Oppo-

sition, all is impenetrably dark, and all that we know is that nothing can be known. (Laughter.) No, I beg pardon, I am wrong in that—we know this, that, according to the Opposition, all the past twenty, and, if you like, all the past forty, years, are evil; but as to the future, you will see it when it comes. (Cheers.) But let me tell you this—that the great statesmanship which consists in silence and secrecy is not original; it is a mere copy. Thirty or forty years ago—I recollect the time very well—there was a great fever and mania for speculation. Everybody went into everything, and they generally came out with nothing. I recollect quite well an advertisement of a Great Sunflower Company—(laughter)—and if anybody had proposed so unsubstantial a speculation as the equinoctial line, people would have taken shares in it. Now at that time there was a very ingenious fellow—if I could remember his name I would try to immortalise him. He put out a prospectus. He was what they call a ‘promoter’ of a great company. It was to have great capital, a great number of shares, and great profits. Everything was great about it. It was to work a great invention. It was a great secret—so profound a secret that, until all the money was paid in, nobody was to know what it was. (Laughter.) Now, that is the Conservative policy at this moment. (Cheers.) They have a policy which they offer for the coming elections. It is a profound secret. When you have all given your votes, and returned a Conservative majority, perhaps then they will tell you what it is. (Laughter and cheers.) . . . Mr. Cobden had to try to persuade the Emperor Napoleon to follow the example of this country with regard to a reduction of import duties, and to the establishment of something like freedom of trade. He told the Emperor how great the benefits had been of the policy of Sir Robert Peel—how great was the regard and reverence for the name of Sir Robert Peel. The Emperor said he should be charmed and flattered if he could think it possible to do things of that kind so good for his country, but he added, ‘It is very difficult in France to make reforms in France. In England you make reforms, in France we make revolutions.’ Now observe, the Emperor was a man who had lived in this country for years; he had watched the workings of public opinion, and of our institutions from his retirement to his exile, and afterwards, for nearly twenty years, he observed them from the lofty stage of the Imperial throne, and that was his judgment, that was the statement which he made to one of the foremost Englishmen representing much of the English opinion, sent by the English Government to negotiate with him a great treaty of commerce; but I believe there is not a thoughtful statesman in any civilised country in the world who would not join with the Emperor in expressing his admiration of the manner in which the people of this country, for the last forty years, have worked out such beneficial reforms in legislation. Our own experience brings us to the same conclusion. These men are in error who tell you that nothing has been done, and that all remains to be done. These men are not less in error who tell you that what has been done is evil, and that it is evil to do any more. What you should do is, to act on the principles and the rule of the past years, still advancing in favour of questions which the public has thoroughly discussed, which it thoroughly comprehends, and which Parliament can honestly and conscientiously put into law. Looking back these forty years, I feel some sense of content, but it does not in the least lessen, it rather adds to and strengthens my hope for the future. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) The history of the last forty years in this country—judge it fairly, and speak of its legislation—is mainly the history of the conquest of freedom. It will be a grand volume that tells the story. Your name and mine, if I mistake not, will be found in some of its pages. (Hear, hear.) For me the final chapter is now writing. It may be already written. (‘No.’) But for you, this great constituency, you have a perpetual youth and a perpetual future. I pray Heaven that in the years to come, and when my voice is hushed, you may be granted strength and moderation, and wisdom to influence the councils of your country by righteous means to none other than noble and righteous ends.” (Great cheering.)

CHAPTER XLII.

THE CONSERVATIVE POLICY.

Past Legislation—The Conservative Party in Power—The Clerical Title of Reverend—The Cause of the Defeat of the Liberals—The Eastern Question—Speeches on the Burials Bill—Women's Disabilities Removal Bill—His Condemnation of the Foreign Policy of the Government—The Legislation of the last Forty Years—At Bradford and Birmingham—The Opening of the Manchester Town Hall—Famines in India and the Remedy—A Sunday-School Conference.

ON the 26th of January, 1874, Parliament was dissolved, and the election proceeded without any delay. Messrs. Bright, Dixon, and Muntz, were elected without opposition on the 30th of January. Next day Mr. Bright addressed his constituents, remarking:—

“As you stand by the grave of the dead Parliament, I am sure, whether you speak its funeral oration or you write its epitaph, you will be willing to say that it is one of the best and the noblest of the Parliaments whose doings have made the story of English history during many centuries past.” This observation was received with loud applause; and the speaker, eliciting in turn the cheers and laughter of his audience, continued as follows: “But our opponents do not agree with us; they are an unhappy party. Whether in or out, they seem to me alike unfortunate. I have watched their agonies for thirty years. During that time, according to them, the constitution has received some scores of serious wounds, and several of those wounds, though it is curious to say so, have been pronounced fatal. They say that we—that is, the Liberal party—have disturbed classes and interests unnecessarily, that we have harassed almost all sorts of people, and have made ourselves very unpopular thereby. I doubt not that if they had been in the Wilderness, they would have condemned the Ten Commandments as a harassing piece of legislation, though it does happen that we have the evidence of more than thirty centuries to the wisdom and usefulness of those Commandments. Well, I plead guilty to the charge that we have disturbed a good many classes and a good many interests; but then, in pleading that, I offer as the justification that in no single case have we injured a class or interest, and in every case we have greatly benefited the country. It was my expectation within the last year that, when there came this dissolution—and it was not expected so soon—it was my expectation that I should have at that time to write, not an address offering myself as a candidate, but an address of farewell and final thanks. I did not think it was likely that I should ever again be able to take my place upon this platform to address you thus, or to speak in the House of Commons. But I could not at this moment—it was impossible at this juncture that I could take any other course than that which I have taken in offering myself again to you, if you choose to elect me. And though I am not strong to labour as I have been in the past years, yet still possibly I may do something to promote the great interests of our country and to guard the precious fruits of the many victories that we have won.” (Cheers.)

The election throughout the land resulted in favour of the Conservative party, for they had a majority of about fifty. Mr. Gladstone tendered his resignation on the 17th of February, and

Mr. Disraeli became Premier, and an uneventful year followed, with the exception of the wane of trade.

Mr. Bright, in addressing his constituents on 25th of January, 1875, remarked :—

“It has been said very often within the last year that the people—not the people of Birmingham, but the people of the United Kingdom—were a little tired of the legislature and of great measures, and that they preferred, at least for a time, to have rest and quiet. If too much has been done, and if nothing more was to be done, there has been a wonderful consistency in the action of the constituencies, because they have discovered twelve gentlemen whom they have placed on the Treasury Bench—whose special recommendation is that they never did anything—or at least if they attempted to do anything, it was merely to prevent their opponents from doing something. . . . Last July I was spending some time in the extreme north, on the shores of the Pentland Frith. It was a much pleasanter atmosphere than that of the House of Commons. But I was obliged to pick up my information from the papers that came down twice, or at most three times, in the week. I pictured to myself what must be going on in Westminster, and it was a surprising picture. There was the Duke of Richmond—a solemn Scotch proprietor, though not a Scotchman—a man, I should say, incapable of recklessness and enthusiasm. There was the Lord Chancellor, with his wig on, and his wisdom under it, importing, as I thought, some Orange and North of Ireland notions into the affairs of the Established Church. I saw these two in one House, and the Prime Minister in another, engaged in applying a match to every bit of gunpowder they found in their way. (Laughter.) . . . You recollect that a short time ago a bishop made an exhibition of himself, not favourable, as I should say, in connection with the question, whether a respectable and worthy Wesleyan minister should have his name on a tombstone with the word ‘reverend’ before it. I told you that I do not speak strongly, and I hope I never speak evil of dignities; but my learned friend, Sir William Harcourt, in his public speech, alluding, I suppose, to this bishop, speaks of him as a learned simpleton. Now, I would not use such language; I think what the bishop did appears to me almost the natural outcome of his position and the pretensions of his order. He calls himself, or allows himself to be called, the right reverend father, and yet, as for this Wesleyan minister, though he assumes to be called so, he shall not have the word ‘reverend’ prefixed to his name on any tombstone in any churchyard over which he has control. You read now and then some of those beautiful epistles that are found in the New Testament. You will find that St. Peter in speaking of St. Paul speaks of him as our beloved brother Paul. He never once, to my knowledge, uses the term ‘right reverend father.’ Now, if the bishops—if this very bishop, who, being learned, must know something, we may hope, of the epistles, if he were moved by the same spirit by which Peter and Paul were moved, is it not reasonable to think that he would not, at least, object to give this Wesleyan minister any title which he thought it proper to assume for himself? But I take this to be the case—I believe no harm of the bishop, I know nothing of him—bishops are generally, so far as I believe, excellent men, and are generally anxious to do their duty in the best way that is open to them—but it is an instance of that kind of arrogance which comes from the sacerdotal spirit within the Church. It is a form of presumption which is born of privilege, that which does not come from the pride of man, or from his dislike for his fellow-man, but from the unfortunate circumstances in which he is placed, and which breathe into him a mind and spirit, so far as I can judge, which is wholly contrary to the mind and spirit that was in the Apostle from whom I quoted. It is not to be wondered at, when, as one of your poets says, your priests assume to be ‘sole vendors of the law that works salvation’—it is not to be wondered at that, with these privileges, with these endowments, these preferments, this constantly proclaimed superiority—it is not unreasonable to expect that such things as this should happen, and that they should despise men—humble and hard-working men—whose labours have been abundantly blessed by Heaven, but who seem to intrude into their privileged field.”

Mr. Bright was one of the invited guests to a conversazione which was got up by the Birmingham Liberal Association in their Town Hall on the 28th of January, 1875, and in com-

menting on some of the causes of the defeat of the Liberals at the late general election, said :—

“Amongst the many thousands of publicans there are a great number of respectable and honourable men; and there are many more than are supposed to be by those who sometimes too fiercely assail them. But there is another and lower class of whom one can scarcely say this, and I am afraid that, as in many other things, so in this combination of the publicans against the public interest, the head of the great body is moved by the tail. (Laughter.) . . . Then I come to another cause of defeat, which is one of a wholly different character, and that is the divisions which existed—the absolutely childish policy that was pursued—in many parts of the country, in many constituencies, by sections or fragments of the Liberal party. . . . If you look over the boroughs of the country at the last election, you will find that at least a dozen of them, possessing twenty-four or twenty-five votes, were lost by the mode of conduct which I have been exposing and condemning; and if you will suppose that the publicans, with a want of patriotism shocking to think of, were the cause of losing an equal number of votes, you will find whence comes nearly the whole of the majority of the present Government. Then there is another great cause, as I think, of loss. In 1867 the election went with a great sweep all over the country in favour of a Liberal policy and of the Liberal party. The new franchise had come into operation for the first time, and the elections were so decided and so decisive that it was common to hear men say, ‘The Tories are done for ever; here is a majority of a hundred or more. The matter is so much decided now that really after all we need have no apprehension again that the Liberal party will ever be in jeopardy.’ They forgot then, and they forget now, what are the permanent conditions, at least for the present and for some time to come, of politics in this country. They forget the solid power that is always opposed to the Liberal party and to Liberal principles. They forget that almost all the land of the country is in the hands of persons whose interests are different from ours. They forget that the Church, which is established, as you know, in every parish, is nearly always on the side of the Tory party; and that wherever a new church is built, be it in town or be it in country, be it in any county in England or Wales, you will find that that Church is not a centre of political light, but of political darkness, and from it there comes no trace of anything that is found to be Liberal in representation or Parliamentary action, but entirely on the contrary; and the Church is now as certain to be the centre of the propagation of Tory principles as the public house itself. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) In addition to this, you have another cause (which I am not about to complain of, because I believe it is in the nature of things), that is, that some men become rich, and many become what is called very comfortably off, and generally the more wealthy a man is, with a balance at his banker’s, and investments everywhere, the more timid he becomes in all his political actions. Well, then, with this timidity on high, and unhappily profound ignorance below, you may fancy, to a certain extent, what a vast amount of solid resistance there is to any proposition for any political progress; and then you should add to all this that which I must mention, though one does not like to treat of it, the enormous lying in which our opponents, from top to bottom of their organisation, throughout their political speeches, and throughout their press, indulged against Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues during the whole time they were in office.”

Mr. Bright was again with his constituents in their Town Hall on the 22nd of January, 1876, and delivered his annual address. He was accompanied by his colleagues. In concluding a lengthy speech, Mr. Bright said :—

“I think the Liberals and the Liberal party, whether you take its history from the Revolution, or whether you take a shorter period—within the memory of many of us—since the time of the passing of the first Reform Bill, have shown a sense of justice and unselfishness in their policy which has never been shown by what is called the Conservative party. I ask any man to show one measure that we, as a Liberal party, have ever advocated or have succeeded in carrying whose object or effect has been

private or class gain, as opposed to the public interest. And now, if I propose to you to move forward, having done what you have done for the towns, with a view of doing something more for the counties, what we ask of you is that you shall free the counties as you have freed the towns; that you shall free the men, and the soil that they cultivate. Here is a policy consistent with everything that we have done in the past. It is a policy worthy of all the hopes, and the high hopes, of a great party for the future." (Cheers.)

An insurrectionary movement broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina in May, 1875, and the Eastern question once more troubled the English Government. The Bulgarian horrors next startled Europe, and Servia and Montenegro declared war against Turkey.

The members of the Manchester Reform Club wished to hear Mr. Bright's opinion on recent events, and on the 2nd of October, 1876, he paid them a visit, and in his speech said:—

"I have no objection if we can lead in a policy of mercy and freedom. Let us dissolve partnership with a power which curses every land that is subject to it. One of our poets has said, and said truly—

"Byzantines boast that on the clod,
Where once their Sultan's horse has trod,
Grows neither grass, nor shrub, nor tree."

There is no doubt whatever that desolation and ruin are lasting memorials of the Moslem power on the once fertile shores of the Mediterranean. . . . I say that the speech delivered the other day at Aylesbury was a speech of defiance to the people of England, a speech heartless and cruel as respects Servia and Bulgaria. (Hear, hear.) There is a demand for an autumn Session. I believe nobody is more opposed to an autumn Session than a member of Parliament is—(laughter)—but though it is full of inconvenience, still the demand for it seems to me at this time constitutional and wise. Ministers are at variance, and the Prime Minister in his speech defies the country. If there was a dissolution now, what would happen? I suspect the Ministers would fear it greatly. They would be swept off the boards, and in their place a new policy and a new Ministry would be installed. I think the chief who made that speech—a speech which I deeply regret, and I think by this time he must also have regretted it—would by that public opinion be swept from his pride of place and from his place of power. Let him meet Parliament, or let him meet the constituencies; I am not afraid of what would be the decision of the country. (Cheers.) We regret, the country regrets, our past policy with regard to the Turkish question. We regret, the country regrets, the sacrifices of the Crimean war. We are not now anxious to go to war to defend the Turk, and we are not called upon and do not intend to go to war to defend the enemies of the Turk. We are at a long distance from that part of the world. It is no business of ours to be sending ships and troops nearly three thousand miles to effect territorial changes in which we have no real and no direct interest. If we left it to the course of nature—nature as explained to us by historic facts—the question would no doubt some way settle itself. But if we had a Parliament, or a dissolution and a general election, the policy of England would in my opinion be declared; and I freely state to you my judgment that we should have this solemn and irrevocable decision on the part of the people of this country—that the blood and the treasure of England shall never again be wasted on behalf of the Turk—(cheers)—that the vote of our Government, the vote of England, in the Parliament of Europe, shall be given in favour of justice and freedom to Christian and Moslem alike—(cheers)—and that the Ottoman power shall be left hereafter to the fate which Providence has decreed to corruption, tyranny, and wrong." (Great cheering.)

In the Session of 1875 Dr. Kenealy introduced a petition into the House of Commons, praying for a free pardon for "that unhappy nobleman (the notorious Tichborne claimant) now

languishing in prison," and the three judges were charged with acting unfairly in adjudicating on the case. On the 23rd of April the Doctor moved that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into the conduct of the trial. Mr. Bright, speaking on the motion, said :—

"It is a great public injury, it is a great wrong, that gentlemen of education, and occupying the position of members of this House, should seek to convince persons who could not by any possibility have had so good an opportunity of judging of the matter as the judges and jury whose conduct is condemned—I say it is a great evil to teach such persons what I believe to be utterly untrue, that the judges were partial and corrupt, and that the jury were mistaken in the view which they took. Sir, I can take no such view. I can take no part in such conduct. I would uphold the institutions of this country, in the main, as they exist with regard to the administration of justice; I think the poorest in the land has at least as great an interest in that being done as the richest in the land; and it is because I think this, that I cannot for a moment think of giving my vote in favour of the proposition of the hon. member for Stoke."

The motion was rejected by 433 votes against one.

Mr. O. Morgan, on the 21st of April, 1875, again introduced the second reading of his "Burial Bill." Messrs. Gladstone, Roebuck, Newdegate, Forster, Cross, and other gentlemen, took part in the debate, which, as it proceeded, became threadbare and uninteresting, and gradually the presence of the members decreased. While Mr. Cross was speaking, Mr. Bright was observed to take his pencil out of his pocket and make a few notes. This little incident was soon communicated to the members in the ante-rooms, who began to flock in; and as soon as Mr. Bright rose to speak the House filled rapidly, until every seat was taken up.

"Assume that all the burial-grounds that were in existence before the passing of the Church-rates Abolition Act were established at the cost of the parish, and, therefore, now are—as they are indeed all established by law—the property of the parish," said Mr. Bright, "I am sure honourable gentlemen opposite know, notwithstanding the repeal of the church rates, there were thousands of Dissenters in this country who contribute voluntarily and constantly to the support both of church and the parochial graveyards. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, I have a right to say that the graveyards, for the most part—I believe almost universally—were plots of ground in which the parishioners generally have a peculiar interest. Well, it will be said that every person has a right to be buried there, but only on a certain condition: that either he must have the service of the Established Church, or have no service at all; for that, I think, is the argument of right honourable gentlemen opposite. Now, it is quite open for persons to dissent, if they like, from the services of the Church of England. About one-half of the population of England and Wales have dissented. That, I think, is a considerable matter when you are considering this question. There are many grounds on which men have dissented from the Church of England; but having been brought up in circumstances of Nonconformity in their families, and in all their associations, it is quite reasonable to expect, and easy to understand, that they should prefer that at a time like this, and for a service of this nature, some other service or some other ceremony should be adopted in their case. If that be so, I should like to have some reasonable ground stated why their wish should not be complied with. (Hear, hear.) You say they shall have no service at all. But there must be those who, although, for some cause or other, they dislike the Church service, still are of opinion that it is better to have some service, not for the sake of the dead—I hope, indeed I believe, that no Nonconformist in this

country is so superstitious as to believe that—but for the sake of the living, and those who surround the grave. Why do you impose this test? You say the graveyard is the graveyard of the parish. The body which is brought to the parish graveyard is that of a parishioner whom only last week you held as a fellow-parishioner, and whom you met in your street, on his farm, or in his garden. He dies, and his friends propose to bury him there. You say ‘No,’ he shall not come at all, except on certain conditions. First of all, he shall have read over him a service arranged some 200 or 300 years ago—which I am willing to admit is very impressive and very beautiful; nobody I think denies that—but ‘he shall have this read over him and nothing else. If he does not have this, he shall have nothing at all.’ I won’t say that he is to be buried like a dog, because that is an expression founded on a miserable superstition. I shall be buried like a dog on that argument, and all those with whom I am most connected and whom I most love, and the society for which in past times my ancestors suffered persecution, they have all been ‘buried like dogs’ if that phrase be a just one. (Cheers.) But I ask if half the population hold this opinion, why is it that they should have this test imposed upon them? (Hear, hear.) You have abolished the test for offices; it is not now necessary that a man should take the Sacrament according to the practice of the Church of England before he undertakes any office under the Crown. That test has been swept away. Why is it when a man or a body of a man, or one of the parishioners, is brought to your graveyard gate, and his friends ask that he may be there interred with decency and solemnity, that you say ‘No, I shall not inter him here, he is not to be buried here’—even although his family, his friends, who have gone before him, and his children who have prematurely died, lie there—‘unless that he has the service that we prescribe, or unless that he has no service at all,’ and shall thus be buried in a manner of which his friends may not approve? (Cheers.) . . . I will take a case of my own sect, and try to draw an argument from that. We have no baptism; we do not think it necessary. We have no service—no ordered or stated service—over the dead. We don’t think that necessary. But when a funeral occurs in my sect, the body is borne with as much decency and solemnity as in any other sect or in any other case to the grave side. The coffin is laid by the side of the grave. The family and friends and the mourners stand round, and they are given some time—no fixed time, it may be five minutes, or ten, or even longer—for that private and solemn meditation which the grave invites, even to the most unthinking and the most frivolous. If any one there feels it his duty to offer any word of exhortation, he is at liberty to offer it. If he feels that he can bow the knee and offer a prayer to Heaven, not for the dead, but for those who stand round the grave, for the comfort of the widow, or for succour and fatherly care for the fatherless children, that prayer is offered. (Cheers.) But if this were done in one of your graveyards, if, for example, such a thing were done there, and a member of my sect, or a Baptist, an Independent, or a Wesleyan, came to be interred in one of your graveyards, and if some God-fearing and good man there spoke some words of exhortation, or on his knees offered a prayer to God, is there one of you on this side of the house or on that, or one of your clergymen, or any thoughtful and Christian man connected with your Church, who would dare, in the sight of Heaven, to condemn that, or to interfere with it by force of law? (Cheers.) The proposition as reduced to a simple case like that is monstrous and intolerable, and I believe the time will come when men will never believe that such a thing could have been seriously discussed in the English House of Commons.”

This eloquent speech lifted the question above the level of either politics or legal controversy, and placing it on higher grounds, increased the number in favour of the Bill to 234, but the majority yet against it was 14.

Mr. Meldon, on the 25th of March, 1876, introduced into the House of Commons the subject of Reform for Ireland, on a motion for the assimilation of the borough franchise in England and Ireland:—

“I believe,” remarked Mr. Bright, in concluding the debate, “that if a measure of this kind were passed it would have the effect in Ireland—it must inevitably have

the effect of teaching the Irish people that the Imperial Parliament is not only not afraid of them, but actually invites their co-operation. It invites every man of them, every householder in boroughs, to take an interest in the political questions which are constantly debated in this House; and I am satisfied that, if you ask them to become partners in the discussions and deliberations of this assembly, it would make them think that it will not be necessary for them to have a small Parliament of their own in Ireland, seeing that this greater Parliament is willing to do them speedy and substantial justice. It still remains true—though all the officials in the world think it worth while to call it in question—that justice done by the Government and Parliament to any portion of the population, be it the most remote, be it the most abject, still that measure of justice is never lost. It is compensated to the power that grants it, be it monarch or be it Parliament, by greater affection, by greater and firmer allegiance to the law, and by the growth of all those qualities and virtues by which a great and durable nation is distinguished.”

The majority against the motion only numbered thirteen.

Mr. Forsyth, on the 26th of April, introduced into the House of Commons his “Women’s Disabilities Removal Bill”:—

“My sympathies have always been in favour of a wide suffrage,” said Mr. Bright, in his speech upon this subject. “They are so at this moment, and I grieve very much that a measure should be submitted to this House in favour of the extension of the suffrage to which I cannot give my support. But I confess I am unwilling, for the sake of women themselves, to introduce them into the contest of our Parliamentary system, to bring them under the necessity of canvassing themselves or being canvassed by others. (Hear, hear.) I think they would lose much of that, or some of that, which is best that they now possess, and that they would gain no good of any kind from being mingled or mixed with Parliamentary contests and the polling-booth. I should not vote for this measure if I were voting solely in the interests of the men; I shall vote against it, I believe with perfect honesty, believing that in doing so I am serving the interests of women themselves. (Cheers.) I recollect that an hon. member who voted for this Bill last year, in conversation with me next day said he had very great doubts upon the matter, because he believed that the best women were against it. Well, I find wherever I go that all the best women seem to be against this Bill. If the House believes that it cannot vote justly for our mothers, our sisters, our wives, and our daughters, the House may abdicate, and pass this Bill; but I believe that Parliament cannot be otherwise—unless it be in ignorance—than just to the women of this country, with whom we are so intimately allied. Believing that, and having these doubts—doubts which are stronger even than I have been able to express, and doubts which have come upon me stronger and stronger the more I have considered this question—I am obliged, differing from many of those whom I care for, and whom I love, to give my vote in opposition to this measure.” (Cheers).

The majority against the Bill was eighty-seven.

Mr. Bright next addressed his constituents at a meeting held in the Birmingham Town Hall on the 4th December, 1876, which had been called to consider the foreign policy of the Government:—

“About seven hundred years ago,” said Mr. Bright in his lengthy speech, “the people of this country, as history tells us, joined the Crusaders, and went to Palestine, for the purpose of liberating the holy places from the possession of the infidel and the Mahometan. And now what do we do? We give the blood and treasure of England to support the Turkish Government. We give Bethlehem, Olivet, and Calvary to the Turk. We condemn to perpetual ruin those vast regions which have become a wilderness and a desert under the Turkish sceptre. We do all this for the simple purpose of preventing the Russians from passing any ships of war from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean. Now that was the policy which brought about the Crimean war in 1854. . . . I do not in any case, as you know, stand forward as a defender of those sanguinary struggles which continually, or at times, take place amongst the nations; but I know not how in some cases they are to be avoided.

There can be no arbitration unless the parties to the dispute are willing. There can be no arbitration between such a Government as that which reigns at Constantinople and the suffering people of whom we have lately heard so much. I only take consolation in the fact, viewing all these tremendous scenes and frightful sufferings—

‘That God from evil still educes good;
Sublime events are rushing to their birth.
Lo! tyrants by their victims are withstood,
And freedom’s seed still grows, though steeped in blood.’

(Cheers.) Let us hope, let us pray, that the efforts that are being made, efforts that I believe are being made as sincerely by the Emperor of Russia as by the Government of this country—let us hope that these efforts may be crowned with success, and that the storm which has been created, and which threatens to rage around us, may be put an end to, and that tranquillity may again speedily prevail. (Cheers.) The late Lord Aberdeen was Prime Minister when the Crimean war was undertaken, and to the last hour of his life probably there was no one event of his life which he so greatly regretted. Sir James Graham, one of the most capable men in the ministry, First Lord of the Admiralty during the war, said to me, in the most frank manner, ‘You were entirely right, and we were entirely wrong.’ I might quote you the opinions, in his later years, of Lord John Russell, who was a member of the Government, and who, in writing since, has endeavoured to show how impolitic the war was, and how it might have been avoided. (Cheers.) In this country—thanks to what our forefathers have done, and thanks to some things which we have done—we enjoy a large measure of freedom: there is room for it to grow and become still larger; but it is large, and we enjoy it, and I trust we are thankful for it. We are also, as I have aforetime said, in some sense the mother of free nations. We have planted great nations, free as ourselves, on the continent of America, where they have grown and become great; we have planted them in Australia, and they are gradually becoming great; we are planting them in South Africa. Our language, which has become the language of freedom in all the world, is gradually making its way amongst all the educated class of India, and the time will come, and I trust it is not very remote, when there may be some kind of free institutions established in the country. The lovers of freedom everywhere look to us; the oppressed everywhere turn their eyes to us and ask for sympathy and wish for help. They feel that they may make this claim upon us, and we, a free people, not only do not deny it, but we freely acknowledge it. Well, I put it to you a solemn question, a question which you must answer to Heaven, and to your children, and to your posterity: shall England, shall the might of England, again be put forth to sustain so foul a tyranny as that which rules in Constantinople?—a tyranny which is drying up realms to deserts; a tyranny which throughout its wide range of influence has blasted for centuries past, with its withering breath, all that is lovely and beautiful in nature, and all that is noble and exalted in man. I ask you, Mr. Chairman, I ask this meeting of my fellow-countrymen, I ask every man in the three kingdoms—and in this case I need not ask women—what shall be the answer given to this question? And I dare undertake to say there can be only one unanimous answer from the generous heart of the English people. (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright was present at the annual meeting of the Rochdale Working Men’s Club, which was held in the Town Hall of that town on the 2nd of January, 1877.

“There has never been,” said Mr. Bright on this occasion, “during the last hundred years, a period when the farmers of this country have made less complaint to the public or to Parliament than they have during the last thirty years, since the law for their protection was abolished. And what happened to the labourer? The wages of farm labourers have risen on the whole much more, I believe, than fifty per cent. throughout the whole country; and in some counties and districts, I believe, the farm labourer at this moment is receiving double the wages he was when the Corn Law was in existence. We ought to learn from this what a grand thing it is to establish our laws upon a basis of freedom and justice. It blesses him who gives and him who takes. It has blessed all our manufacturing districts with a steadiness of employment and an

abundance they never knew before; and it has blessed not less the very class who in their dark error and blindness thought that they could profit by that which was so unjust, so cruel to the bulk of their countrymen. . . . Is it not a grand history, that of the last forty years? Are not the changes such as all of us may be proud of, that they have been effected with so little, in fact with no disturbance? You cannot point, probably, to a revolution of violence in any country of late times where there has been so much done of permanent good in the same period as has been done for the people of this country by the wise changes in our law. And yet, I dare say, history will not say very much of these changes. The fact is, history busies itself with other matters. It will tell our children, I dare say, of conquests in India, of annexation, it may be in the Punjab, of Chinese wars—wars which were as discreditable to us as they have been unprofitable. It will tell your children of the destruction of Sebastopol, and perhaps it may tell them that everything for which Sebastopol was destroyed has been surrendered, or is being now surrendered, by an English minister at Constantinople. But of all these changes which have saved the nation from anarchy, and an English monarchy from ruin, history will probably say but little. Blood shines more upon her pages, and the grand and noiseless triumphs of peace and of wise and just legislation too often find but scanty memorial from her hands. (Cheers.) . . . You know, I dare say, a passage which is one of the many striking passages that you may find in the writings of Shakespeare, where he says, speaking of children that are rebellious and troublesome—

‘How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is
To have a thankless child.’

I ask working men, and I might ask it of every class to a certain extent, how much of the unhappiness of families, how much of the grief and gloom which often overshadow the later years of parents, come from what I may call the rebellion of children against their parents’ authority, and against the moral law. If you will send your children to school, encourage them in their learning, make them feel that this is a great thing for them to possess, the generation to come will be much superior to the generations that have passed, and those who come after us will see that prospering, of which by looking forward we can only see the beginnings in the efforts which are now being made. And more than this, besides making your families happier, besides doing so much for the success of your children in life, you will also produce this great result, that you will do much to build up the fabric of the greatness and the glory of your country upon the sure foundation of an intelligent and a Christian people.”

Mr. Bright, on the morning of the 25th of July, 1877, performed the ceremony of unveiling a statue of Richard Cobden at Bradford. An address was presented to him in St. George’s Hall in the evening, and in his speech he said that neutrality was the true and wise policy of England in the Eastern dispute, adding—

“Five years hence, if this matter be settled, and we do not interfere, we shall all be delighted that we did not interfere. Five years hence, if we do interfere, we shall lament for the dead whose blood has been sacrificed, for the treasure that has been wasted, for the added discord which we have brought to Europe, and, it may be, for the humiliation of our statesmanship and our military operations that may have to be undertaken. Let us then, I say, turning to our foreign policy, be as wise as we are endeavouring to be with our home policy. Let us try to be courteous to all nations, just to all nations—as far as we can, getting rid of the jealousies that have disturbed us; let us believe that whether it be the United States on the other side of the Atlantic, or whether it be the great Empire of Russia in the east of Europe, that there are good, and great, and noble men in those countries; that there is no disposition whatever—as I believe there is none—to make quarrels with this country, and to do evil of any kind to us. Then, great as our nation is, with its power apparent in every quarter of the globe, great will be its influence for good; and though the world moves on slowly—far too slowly for our ardent hopes—to its brighter day, history will

declare with impartial voice that Britain, casting off her ancient errors, led the grand procession of the nations in the path of civilisation and of peace."

The same day Mr. Bright was entertained at luncheon at the Victoria Hotel by Mr. Jacob Behrens, President of the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, with a large number of other guests. In replying to the toast of his health, he said :—

"The fact is, the world, as we are in it but for a very short time, does not seem to go on very fast, and we must be satisfied if we can move it only a little; but the interests of all mankind are so bound up in this question that it only wants that you should dispel the sort of fog which intercepts their vision, when they would come at once to see a promised land which was within their reach, and a fruit such as they have never tasted that was within their grasp; and if this view could once be opened up to the intelligent people in these countries of a constantly growing intelligence, I have a confident belief that the time will come, that it must come, that it is in the decrees of the Supreme that it shall come, when these vast evils shall be suppressed, and men shall not learn war any more, and God's earth shall not be made, as it is, a charnel-house by the constant murder of hundreds of thousands of His creatures."

In the first week of June, 1877, Mr. W. E. Gladstone visited Birmingham, and delivered a series of speeches on public questions. On the first of June the Mayor entertained the distinguished statesman at the Queen's Hotel. Mr. Bright, who was also present, in responding to the toast of the borough members, said :—

"This week Birmingham is maintaining its ancient character. There is no town in England at this moment that occupies so great, and so proud, and at the same time so responsible a position as your town. You are foremost in good works, and have been for many years past. Your Town Hall is consecrated to freedom, but your Town Hall is now not one-quarter large enough for all those who would come to listen to a great speech on behalf of freedom. You now call upon your sister cities and towns throughout the kingdom to come forward and to join in a great association, in order that the opinion in England which is in favour of freedom may act with full force by its full development; and I say, then, that we have a right to hope that from this centre and heart of the country, as you are geographically and as you are politically—I say from this centre and heart of the country there should go forth light and warmth and heat, which should be seen and felt in every borough in the kingdom. And if it be so, and if you get the answer which I anticipate from those sister cities and towns, there is no measure that is good and noble, nothing that is a measure of freedom and justice, that you may not carry; and you from this centre may influence, as you have heretofore influenced, the administration and the legislation that touches every portion of the great empire of which we form a part."

Mr. Bright was present at the banquet in the Manchester New Town Hall, on the 13th September, 1877, which was held to celebrate the opening of this magnificent building, and in the course of his speech he said :—

"We are here to-night standing in the centre of a district more wonderful in some respects than is to be traced out on the map of any other kingdom in the world. The population is extraordinary. It is extraordinary for its interests and its industries, for the amount of its wealth, for the amount of its wages, and for the power which it exercises in its public opinion on and over the public opinion of the nation. But still, for all that, although the present and the past have been so brilliant, I cannot help thinking in all conscience of the fact that the future is not without anxiety. Even, I may say, that the present is not without its clouds. Now,

I have an anecdote on my mind with regard to this matter which I may relate here, for a friend of many years was concerned in it. About thirty-five years ago my late friend, and your friend, Mr. Cobden, and my friend who is here to night, Mr. Henry Ashworth, and myself were in Scotland on an expedition to preach the doctrines of the Anti-Corn Law League—(hear, hear)—and in the course of our journey we stayed for a night or two with the late Mr. George Hope, of Haddington, who was one of the very first agriculturists in Scotland. He took us to see a famous ruin in that neighbourhood which my right hon. friend the Lord Provost is very well acquainted with, the ruins of Tantallon Castle. This castle is the ruin of a stronghold that one time belonged to the famous and powerful Douglas family. As I walked in amongst these ruins my friend Mr. Ashworth stopped me, turned round with a look of sadness, and said, 'How long will it be before our great warehouses and factories in Lancashire are as complete a wreck as this castle?' I have thought of that several times since, I thought of it then with sadness, as I think of it now. One thing is certain, if ever they come to ruin they will never be so picturesque a ruin as the ruin of Tantallon Castle. (Hear, hear.) But I think sometimes that we are not always aware of some of the perils which beset us. We import, as you know, most of the material of our industry from the distant parts of the world—from Egypt, from India, from South America—but mainly from the United States of North America, and bring it here, and we work it up here. We use a good deal in this country for our own consumption. We export a great portion of it to other countries, some of it to almost every country in the world, and we have to stand in every country the competition of the industries of all their people, and we have also to overcome, if it be possible, the barriers which costly tariffs have erected against Free-trade. We are pursuing also a course at home which is not without its danger. We have been for many years past, as you know, gradually diminishing the period of time during which our machinery can work, under the idea that the condition of the people would be improved by it. We are surrounded by a combination whose object is not only to diminish the time of labour and the product of labour, but to increase the remuneration for labour. Every half hour you diminish the time of labour, and every farthing you raise the payment of labour which is not raised by the ordinary economic and proper causes, everything of that kind has exactly the same effect upon us as the increase of the tariffs of foreign countries; and thus we often find, with all our philanthropy in wishing the people to have more recreation, and with our anxiety that the workman should better his condition through his combinations, that we are ourselves aiding, it may be inevitably and necessarily, but it is a fact that we are aiding, to increase the difficulties under which we labour, in sending foreign countries the increased products of the industry of these districts. And we must bear in mind that great cities have fallen before Manchester and Liverpool were known; that there have been great cities, great mercantile cities, on the shores of the Mediterranean—the city of Phœnicia, the city of Carthage, the city of Genoa, and the city of Venice. The poet says of the people of Venice:—

'Her daughters had their dowers
From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East,
Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.'

But what are the lines with which he concludes?

' Venice lost and won,
Her thirteen hundred years of freedom done,
Sinks like a seaweed into whence she rose.'

Therefore when we are met in this magnificent hall, to enjoy the profuse and generous hospitality of the Mayor and his friends, and surrounded by the vast industries of this powerful district, let us not for a moment imagine that we stand on a foundation absolutely sure and absolutely immovable, and that we are not liable to the dangers which have overthrown and overwhelmed the great municipalities and the cities and the prosperous industries of other countries and other times." (Hear, hear.)

Probably the number of strikes continually taking place all over the country, and other signs of the times, as well as an occurrence that happened at Messrs. Bright's mills some years ago, were the cause of Mr. Bright's taking such a gloomy view

of affairs. The occurrence is well worth relating. It was at the time when Messrs. Bright were having a large mill erected by Mr. Peters, of Rochdale, who had undertaken to have it completed by a certain date. Mr. Peters found at last that there was scarcely sufficient time for his masons to prepare the coping stones, but ascertaining that there were some on sale in Yorkshire suitable, which had been made for a new mill in course of erection there, he purchased them, as the owner had no use for them on account of having altered the designs of his building. Accordingly they were removed to Messrs. Bright's mills, but Mr. Peters's masons threatened to strike if the stones were used for the purpose for which they were purchased, pointing out that it was against the rules of their society to use stones in a different county from that in which they were "dressed." However, the workmen said there was one way out of the difficulty, and that was to let them pretend to chisel the stones. Mr. Peters, rather than there should be a strike, consented to pay the masons for pretending to work, and there was no great anxiety on the part of the employed to get through their laborious work speedily.

Mr. Bright, on the 25th of September, distributed the Queen's prizes and the certificates of merit in the Rochdale Town Hall to the successful students of the Science and Art classes of the town, and delivered a lengthy speech on the progress of science and art during the past century.

"I believe there is nothing so likely to guard young men," said Mr. Bright, "from temptations and to make their homes happy—happy now while young, and happy hereafter, if they should become heads of families—as taking this very common advice which everybody gives you, and which you find very difficult to follow, but which I beseech you to try to follow. Look at the heads I see before me, strong heads that can do anything—stonemasons, carpenters, mechanics, engineers, weavers, spinners—every occupation there is in the neighbourhood. I see men who can work at all these trades so well that nobody in the world can do them better, and if they were to give a little of the energy and hard-headedness which they give to their ordinary work to the pursuit of knowledge in an evening, in twelve months' time they would find they had travelled a long distance, that their difficulties had become fewer, and what had been hard work had become a pleasure. I do not say from Rochdale we should have many great inventors, but great things would be done. It might remain, still, that you would never be rich, that you would always find it necessary to work steadily and honestly for your daily bread; but you would discover that God has given many of his best gifts so freely that the humblest are not shut out from the blessings which He has prepared for His creatures." (Cheers.)

The Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain, M.P., visited Rochdale on the 7th of November, and delivered a speech in the Town Hall of the town on political organisation. Mr. Bright officiated as the chairman, and, in opening the meeting, contrasted the motives which had guided the two great political parties in their legislative efforts, remarking that to the Conservatives belonged shame

and humiliation, and to the Liberals a very high degree of satisfaction and just pride, when they contemplated the results of the last half-century of legislation and government in this country. He gave the Conservatives credit for the possession of a solid and permanent organisation, the strength of which was to be found in the landed interest, the Church, the military and legal professions, and in the publicans; and said that unless the Liberal party organised themselves to advance their own cause and principles, the country would go back, and we might even lose some of the liberties we had gained. With respect to the landed interest, he did not advocate any system of legislation which would deprive anybody of a single acre of land, but the land should be divided a little more equally among the great body of the people; and he objected to laws which created and maintained a monopoly in this matter.

On the 11th of December, 1877, Mr. Bright was present at a meeting in the Manchester Town Hall. This meeting had been convened by the members of the Manchester India Association to discuss how the famines had arisen, and how to put an end to them. Sir Arthur Cotton took part in the proceedings.

"What are these famines?" asked Mr. Bright, adding; "some of them you have never heard of, or if you have, you do not remember them. There was a famine in 1837-8, which afflicted 8,000,000 of people, 5,000,000 with great severity, during which no less than 800,000 persons died of famine, more than half as many again as all the men, women, and children of this great city in which we are assembled, and the people of England scarcely heard anything of it, excepting now and then in a paragraph extracted from an Indian paper. In 1860-1 there was another famine. There were 13,000,000 affected; 5,000,000 suffered intensely. The mortality, as far as I have searched for it, is not on record; but I do not think there is any reason to believe that it was any smaller than in the previous famine. In 1863 there came the famine in Bengal and Orissa, and one quarter of the population died in some of the districts. The total amount of the deaths was enormous. Nearly the whole of the labouring population was swept away over large districts of the country during the pressure of that calamity. In 1868-9 occurred the great famine in Rajpootana, and the districts around it. One hundred thousand square miles, or one-sixth of the whole area of the country, were more or less affected by this famine, and 1,250,000 persons are admitted by the Government estimates to have perished of hunger. In 1877, the present year, it is estimated that more than all the population of this great city have died, and those who die, or the figures of those who die, do not represent the whole calamity. There are multitudes who die afterwards, who suffer and linger, who know never again a day's good health, and whose names are not on the record which tells us of the mortality of the famine. . . . There is always soil, and there is always sun, and there is always rain; but the rain does not always fall when you want it, and it is not at the particular time just as much or as little as you want. But, if you have soil, and sun, and water, and human labour, you have rich harvests throughout a great portion of India. Now, that is a very simple doctrine which I suppose few people will be disposed to dispute. But with the rain-fall there is some difficulty, because the rain comes down there sometimes in profuse quantities. . . . If canals for navigation or irrigation were made upon some grand scheme determined by eminent and competent engineers, you would find the produce of nearly all the districts of India greatly increased, and all those not hitherto irrigated would probably be doubled. Produce would be carried cheaply to the coast, and it would be distributed in the interior of the country, where there was partial scarcity, from where there was great abund-

ance, and the surplus would come to this country and help to feed the growing population we have amongst us." (Cheers.)

Mr. Bright was present at the annual meeting of his constituents on the 13th of January, 1878, and remarked :—

"It is a painful and terrible thing to think how easy it is to stir up a nation to war. Take up any decent history of this country from the time of William III. until now, a period of two centuries or nearly so, and you will find that wars are always supported by a class of arguments which, after the war is over, the people find were arguments they should not have listened to. It is just so now, for unfortunately there still remains the disposition to be excited on these questions. Some poet, I forget which it is, has said—

'Religion, freedom, vengeance, what you will,
A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;
Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread,
That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed.'

'Some cunning phrase by faction caught and spread,' like the cunning phrase of 'the balance of power,' which has been described as the ghastly phantom that the Government of this country has been pursuing for two centuries, and has not yet overtaken. (Hear, hear.) Some cunning phrase like that we have now of 'British interests.' Lord Derby said the wisest thing that has been uttered by any member of this Administration during the discussions on this war, when he said 'the greatest of British interests is peace.' (Cheers.) And a hundred, far more than a hundred, public meetings have lately said the same; and millions of households of men and women have thought the same. To-night we shall say 'Amen' to this wise declaration. (Cheers.) I am delighted to see this grand meeting in this noble Town Hall. This building is consecrated to peace and to freedom. You are here in your thousands, representing the countless multitudes outside. May we not to-night join our voices in this resolution, that, so far as we are concerned, the sanguinary record of the history of our country shall be closed; that we will open a new page on which shall henceforth be inscribed only the blessed message of mercy and of peace?" (Loud cheers.)

Lord George Hamilton, the Under Secretary of State for India, early in 1878, introduced a motion into the House of Commons with respect to the construction of public works in India.

"Talk of this savage and destructive war now waging in the east of Europe," said Mr. Bright, "we hear of thousands being slaughtered; but all that war has done, and all that the wars of the past ten years have done, has not been equal, in the destruction of human life, to the destruction caused by the famines which have occurred in the great dependency of the English Crown in India. . . . If famine comes from want of water, clearly to get rid of famine you must have water. You cannot have water except by works of irrigation. You have the rain from heaven; you have the great rivers; and you have a great Government, which has conquered the country, and which, having conquered it, at least ought to exercise all the powers of its intellect for the purpose of saving its people from this suffering and this ruin, and ought to save this Parliament and this country from the degradation and humiliation of allowing it to be known throughout the world that millions of the subjects of the Crown in India, in the course of ten years, perish by famine, which great engineers and men of character and experience say positively might altogether have been prevented."

The House ultimately adopted the following resolution :—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report as to the expediency of constructing public works in India with money raised on loan, both as regards financial results and the prevention of famine."

The Earl of Derby and the Earl of Carnarvon, finding that the Cabinet were drifting into a war policy, resigned. The Government applied to the House of Commons in January for a vote of credit, in order to be prepared if England was forced into the war. Mr. Forster moved an amendment :—

“That this House, having been informed in her Majesty’s gracious speech that the conditions on which her Majesty’s neutrality is founded had not been infringed by either belligerents engaged in the war in the east of Europe, and having since received no information sufficient to justify a departure from the policy of neutrality and peace, sees no reason for adding to the burdens of the people by voting unnecessary supplies.”

Mr. Bright, in his speech, which was listened to by a crowded House, deprecated the unworthy suspicion of Russia, and urged the Government not to throw their sword into the scale at a time when the combatants appeared to be about to sheathe theirs, adding :—

“I would declare this—the government of this country ought to declare it—the time is not far distant, I believe, when they will declare it—I think it is now pretty much the mind of the people of England—that we have no interest in any longer taking any step whatever to maintain the Ottoman rule in Europe, that we have no interest in cherishing a perpetual animosity against Russia. There are two policies before us—the old policy, which, if we leave it to our children, will be a legacy of future wars; the new policy, which I contend for, and which I preach, and which if we adopt we shall leave to our country, not a legacy of war, but a legacy of peace, and a growing and lasting friendship with one of the greatest empires of the globe.”

After a lengthy debate, Mr. Forster withdrew his amendment, and the vote of credit was ultimately agreed to.

A treaty of peace between Russia and Turkey was signed at San Stefano on the 3rd of March, and was ratified on the 17th of the same month at St. Petersburg. Still the English Government caused great uneasiness by the removal of Indian troops to Malta. An address, signed by 400 Dissenting ministers, deprecating a war with Russia, was presented to Mr. W. E. Gladstone, and meetings were held all over the country, at which resolutions were passed protesting against war with Russia.

Mr. Bright, on the 19th of April, 1878, was the chairman of the annual conference of the Sunday-school teachers of the Association for Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire, which was held in the United Methodist Free Church, Baillie Street, Rochdale.

“Now, take the present time in which we are living—the present hour, the present moment,” remarked Mr. Bright in opening the proceedings of the Conference. “We have, as you know—all men and women capable of thinking must have at this moment a subject of great anxiety pressing upon them. I shall not attempt to discuss it, because that would be apart from the business of a meeting like this; but I want to ask you this. Do you think, looking from the point of the Christian work in which you are engaged, that the common view of war is a wise or a

Christian view? How is it regarded? As a thing that is frequent, that is usual, that is useful, and that is necessary. It comes as heavy rains come, as a bad harvest comes, or some other natural calamity; and, in fact, if we read the history of this country or of any country, that is exactly all that history teaches us upon this great question. History often forgets, and the people continually forget, how trivial and how insufficient is generally the cause of war. And they forget also, until it is past, and then even they soon forget, its terrible results. Now, at this moment we are told by certain newspaper writers, by many public men, and by some persons we meet in the streets, that a great portion, or a considerable portion of the population of Great Britain is very eager for war. May I not ask you if persons of this class, if there be such, are not in almost total ignorance of what it is they propose to go to war for, or to obtain by war? They have some vague notion of national interests or national honour, which are phrases that they have heard repeated hundreds of times, but never once have known to be satisfactorily explained. They are blind to its unspeakable wickedness, to its multitudinous crimes, to its horrors and its sufferings. Now, if our youth were instructed in these things, if they were conscious that the carnage of war sends thousands of immortal spirits unbidden to the unseen world, surely none, in such ignorance as prevails, would urge it upon a Government. They would be, in point of fact, so enamoured of peace, that a Government seeking peace would be able to secure it. They would be so much against war, that they would be enabled to restrain any Government that, step by step, might seek to involve the country in the calamity of war. . . . If on Sunday last it had been put, or if on Sunday next it could be put, to all the Nonconformist Free Church congregations throughout Great Britain, whether it were the duty or the interest of this country to be involved in war or not, I have no doubt whatsoever that throughout all those congregations, from Caithness to Cornwall, there would have been a universal and unanimous voice in favour of the preservation of peace. Lord Derby said not long ago that the greatest of British interests was peace. Can it be possible that the Christian men and women who are engaged in your holy work should not coincide with him in that view? You are yourselves the ministers, humble but earnest, of the Prince of Peace. It is, therefore, within your calling, within your solemn duty—even it may be your special duty on an occasion like this—that you should express some feeling on this question; and if there ascends from your heart a prayer to the throne of the Most High on behalf of your children and on behalf of your nation, let it be a prayer that He may turn the hearts of your rulers from thoughts of war, and bring them to sentiments of mercy and of peace. When I think of the illustrious lady who sits upon the throne of these realms, when I think how bright in the main are the annals of her reign—the one greatest blot upon them in our time, and until now, is the war of twenty-four years ago—let us hope that our hearts may be spared the sorrow that must afflict us, and the record of her reign be spared the additional blot which would be cast upon it if again the blood of our countrymen should be shed in favour of a cause which no man can distinctly define or describe, and in pursuit of objects which no rational man in the world believes it is possible for arms to obtain.”

Mr. Bright, on the evening of the 30th of April, presided at a great demonstration in the Free-trade Hall, Manchester. In the morning 15,000 delegates from the surrounding towns assembled in conference, to protest against hostilities with Russia.

“I ask you here,” said Mr. Bright, in opening the meeting, “it may not be worth while to ask any Conservative here or outside: there must be Conservatives so-called who vote for Conservative candidates, who have, I trust, some idea beyond that of the mere superiority or success of party—there must surely be Conservatives, as there are any number of Liberals, who consider great national interests and great truths to be superior to the demands of party; and I ask them whether they will be led in this career and to this terrible catastrophe by a Minister—for I hold that I am not describing the policy of the country—I am not even describing the policy of Parliament—I may not even be describing the secret wished-for policy of the whole of the Cabinet; I am describing, as far as I can gather it, the policy of a Minister—a Minister who for forty years has never yet been known of his free-will, or from an earnest and liberal mind, to say or do anything for the advance of any of those great measures of good and of freedom which have distinguished the legislation of

this country. . . . We may differ upon many points of articles in Churches, but we are all agreed on this, that if there be anything definite and distinct in the teachings of the New Testament it is that which would lead to amity amongst peoples, and to love and justice and mercy and peace on the whole of God's earth upon which His sun shines. (Cheers.) If, then, we are agreed upon this, let us, if it be possible to throw off the hypocrite in this matter—(hear, hear)—let us get rid of our Christianity, or get rid of our tendency and willingness to go to war. (Hear, hear.) War is a game which, if their subjects were wise, kings would not be able to play at; and be they kings or queens, be they statesmen of this or that colour or party, never let any man go headlong into any policy that directs for war until he has thoroughly examined the question by his own best intellect, brought it to bear on his own Christian conscience, and decided it for himself as if he were asked to pull the trigger or to use the sword. (Cheers.) We send men out to engage in the ravages of war who have no knowledge whatever of the question for which they have to fight—(hear, hear)—and not satisfied now with taking them from our own midst, we who have been—not we, but some amongst us—(hear, hear)—who have been menacing India with an invasion from Russia, are now actually apparently on the point of invading Russia by troops from India; and we who have been asking Russia not on any account to go near the Suez Canal because we require it for the traffic of our trade to India, are now employing that very canal, which Russia has not approached, in bringing troops—Mahometan half-savage troops—from India to make war upon the Christian population of Russia. (Cries of 'Shame.') I think these are questions which we are bound to consider. (Hear, hear.) I say without hesitation—and I speak to all the people of England—(cheers)—I say that for no such cause as this shall the torrents of English blood be called to flow which apparently are now on the point of being shed at the command—I will say to the people at the betrayal—of a Minister who has not one single drop of English blood in his veins." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Bright at this time needed the assistance of his old friend, Mr. Cobden, to oppose the embroilment of his countrymen in warfare, for the Liberals were against what the Conservatives termed their "spirited foreign policy."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE POLICY OF THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT CONDEMNED.

Death of Mrs. Bright—Statue of Villiers—In the House of Commons in February, 1879—Annual Address to his Constituents—Explanation of the Depression in Trade—At a Liberal Demonstration at Manchester—Visit to Birmingham, Rochdale, and Islington.

THE month of May is always anticipated with bright and delightful aspirations, for all nature is waking by this time from her winter's slumber. The spring of 1878 had come sooner up than usual "from the south." The swallows had already winged their passage from the south, and returned to the roof of "One Ash," when Mr. Bright left his home to attend his Parliamentary duties in London. His eldest daughter, Mrs. Clark, and her little ones, were sojourning at "One Ash." Mrs. Bright had been down to Ackworth Schools, in which she had for many years taken a deep interest, and afterwards visited the school connected with the mills, examined the scholars, spoke words of encouragement to them, and before leaving once more induced them to sing one of her favourite hymns, commencing with the words, "Let us gather up the sunbeams." On Sunday, the 12th of May, she attended the service at the Friends' Meeting House at Rochdale, and at the conclusion conversed cheerfully with her fellow-worshippers; still her health was impaired. The following day the sun bathed the earth with joyous splendour, and

"The solitary primrose on the bank
Seemed now as though it had no cause to mourn."

Mrs. Clark and her children that morning were about to leave for their home at Street, and Mrs. Bright, whilst affectionately taking leave of them in their nursery, suddenly fell on the floor, in a fit of apoplexy, and died in a few minutes. A telegram was immediately forwarded to Mr. Bright, who returned in the evening to his home of sorrow. The next day Her Majesty the Queen forwarded a telegram from Windsor Castle to Mr. Bright, expressing her deep sympathy with him in his bereavement, and from all parts of the country resolutions from Town Council meetings and associations of warm-hearted working men, who turned from the contemplation of their own anguish and misery

to express their thoughts of sympathy with Mr. Bright, as he sat in the valley of the shadow of death. In reply to a resolution of condolence from the Manchester Town Council, he replied :—

“I can say very little of what I have felt, and now feel, of the sympathy which has been expressed towards my family and myself. So far as sympathy can in any degree lessen the burden of affliction, we have had that solace to its widest extent. I am specially grateful to the Town Council over which you preside for their remembrance of me in this time of trial.”

On the 16th May the funeral set forth from “One Ash,” and consisted of a simple hearse without its usual adornments, and nine plain carriages, followed by about 150 of Messrs. Brights’ workpeople. Whitworth Road, and the other line of route along Yorkshire Street, and down George Street, to the Friends’ Meeting House, was thickly lined with reverential spectators. The graveyard was thronged with respectable inhabitants of Rochdale. At the grave-side Mr. Bright was visibly affected, and leaned on the shoulders of his youngest son, Mr. Philip Bright. Mr. John A. Bright, and Mr. W. L. Bright, Miss A. E. Bright, Miss M. S. Bright, Mrs. and Mr. Clark, Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P., Mr. Thomas Bright, Mrs. and Mr. McLaren, M.P., Mr. E. A. Leatham, M.P., Mr. W. H. Leatham, and Dr. Roth were present. There was an utter absence of ceremonial parade, which distinguishes this homely, steadfast, and humble community. Mr. J. B. Braithwaite, barrister, London, and Mr. W. G. Turner, of Liverpool, spoke words of consolation and Christian resignation.

The assemblage round the grave formed a memorable picture, for there stood a venerable central historical figure sorrowing, who had, in days of comparative ignorance, seen clearly and spoken boldly for supreme good, and who pointed out with prophetic foresight the only true policy to pursue in relation to the mainstay of his country’s happiness and greatness. There lay before him the lifeless form of her who had solaced his bitter moments of defeat, and graced the bright hours of triumph; who, ’mid the cares and disquietudes of public life, had, by her bright augurs of the future, soothed, and, in the hour of despondency by her calm confidence in Heaven, cheered him.

The mourners at length retired into the chapel for devotion, and an incident of thoughtful kindness was here observed. A poor old woman, cleanly and humbly attired, and with snow-white frilled cap and old-fashioned silk bonnet surrounding her comely features, took a seat opposite to Mr. Bright, and as he

noticed that there was no footstool for her use, he gave her the one which had been placed for his special accommodation. The service proceeded, and the fervent prayers inculcated amongst other thoughts that

"There is no death! What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath
Is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portals we call death."

In June, Earl Granville unveiled a statue of the Right Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P., which had been erected by public subscription in Wolverhampton, the borough of which he has represented in Parliament for many years.

"Perhaps you will bear with me," said Earl Granville, "if I tell you that within the last fortnight Mr Bright—(loud cheers)—volunteered to me an expression of his extreme regret at being prevented by an all-sufficient reason from being present here on this occasion. He expressed himself as warmly as Mr. Cobden had done about the great services of Mr. Villiers. He said that while Richard Cobden, George Wilson, and himself and others had worked the question out of doors, they had always considered Mr. Villiers as the man who had made the question his own in the House of Commons. He told me how Mr. Villiers had attended many of their most important public meetings, and how he was ready always with his advice, which Mr. Bright described as excellent, practical, shrewd, and useful in proportion to its fruits, for he added that there was only one thing on which Mr. Villiers was earnestly intent, which was that the thing should be done." (Cheers).

In July, Mr. Bright, in reply to a request from the Birmingham agent of the Alliance that he would support the Permissive Bill, replied:—

"Dear Sir,—I thank you for your letter, and for the kind words you have addressed to me. I regret that I have not been able to vote for Sir W. Lawson's Bill, for reasons which I have already explained to my friends in Birmingham. I am in favour of legislation to promote temperance, but it must be legislation that is practical and just, and which offers fair ground of expectation that it will be useful and effective. I do not expect temperance legislation to make progress until the Permissive Bill is abandoned, and a more practicable and reasonable measure is offered in its place. I regret to differ from some of my friends in Birmingham and elsewhere on this difficult question."

Mr. Bright did not again address the House of Commons until the 28th of February, 1879, and as soon as he rose he was welcomed by hearty cheers given by Conservatives as well as Liberals, and they were glad to listen once more to the accents too long missing from the debates. The subject he spoke upon was in favour of a committee of inquiry respecting India.

Mr. J. Bright and his colleagues delivered their annual addresses to their constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, on the 16th of April, 1879. The hall was crowded to its utmost capacity. The Mayor, Mr. Jesse Collings, presided, and assured Mr. Bright that he had the heartfelt sympathy of his constituents in the great domestic sorrow which had so recently befallen him. The thoughts and the affectionate regard of

the best and truest in the town were with him in his bereavement, and they heartily rejoiced that the craving for rest and retirement, which in the dark time must have been very strong, had given way to the claims of duty and the need which the public had of him at present. At a time when we were hovering on the verge of national disgrace it was peculiarly necessary that we should have his council.

"Since I have been in Parliament it has always been a complaint with me, or a matter of regret," said Mr. Bright, "that Cabinet Ministers spend more time in discussing foreign politics than home affairs. (Hear, hear.) If you go back a hundred years from now, as far as you have an account of what the Cabinet was doing, you will find it was discussing how it could force the colonies of North America to pay English taxes without being represented in the English Parliament. That was a great policy in that day, but, as you know, it entirely failed, and the thirteen little colonies of that time have now grown to be one of the most powerful nations on the globe. If you come down twenty years later, eighty years ago, you find the English Cabinet constantly discussing how it might be able with the help of the resources of this kingdom to suppress the Republic on the other side of the Channel. Yet now you see that the whole of that policy was a failure, and that there exists at this moment, with the consent and sympathy of almost all classes of this country, that once dreaded monster, the French Republic. (Cheers.) And if you come down nearer to our own time, to twenty-five years ago, you would find an English Cabinet discussing for almost two years nothing but questions connected with the great contest with Russia, carried on, as you remember, in that part of the Russian Empire which is called the Crimea. Well, there was a partial success, as there was a partial success in the suppression of the French Republic of 1789 and the overthrow of the Napoleonic Empire in 1815. There was a partial success in the Crimea, yet that policy was rotten from the beginning, and it has been followed, as you know, by an entire failure. There is not a single thing that was obtained by the Treaty of Paris as a result of the Crimean war that has not been surrendered and entirely given up. You will see, then, from these examples—and I might occupy your time the whole evening with other examples—that the present, almost always, with regard to foreign policy, condemns the past, and you may argue, as I venture to predict that the future will likewise condemn the present. (Cheers.) . . . I believe that war was only avoided last year from two causes. One was the moderation of Russia immediately after the triumph over Turkey; the other was the cause taken by the great Liberal party, by the Nonconformists especially, as a great portion of that party, and by the foremost man amongst the statesmen of this country. (Loud cheers.) There are men who cavil now at the position which Mr. Gladstone occupies. I shall say nothing in his defence. The posterity of those who now slander him will be ashamed of the opinions and of the council of their forefathers. (Hear, hear.) But though we have escaped war we have had, as you know, fleets moving in between the Mediterranean and Black Sea, moving and menacing in great force, and we have had the reserves called out, as if something dreadful was about to happen, and we have had Indian troops—a thing almost unknown in our history—brought into the Mediterranean with a view of carrying on war against Russia, and we have had votes of money, which, it was said, would probably not be spent—(laughter)—but which were very suddenly and speedily spent. (Renewed laughter.) But what has been the actual result? The result of the Crimean war, of the American and of the French war, was not more absurd or more discreditable. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) The result was this, that two of the English Ministers, special counsellors of the Queen, went to Berlin. They agreed to everything, so far as I can learn, that was of any importance, to everything which Russia had agreed to with Turkey, except as regards a particular province which Russia proposed to make wholly free from Turkish rule, but which the English Ministers, acting in your name, objected to. That province they cut in two, and handed over half of it to the Turk. Now, I believe it will be held by the people of England, when they consider that question fairly, to be a great blot upon our character and our reputation. . . . Now, the taxation, as I have said (in India), is oppressive, and oppressive to a degree that all

the authorities in India say that you cannot turn the screw any more, and that if you do something worse than a deficient revenue may follow. Half, nearly half, of the whole net taxes of the country is devoted to the support of the army. ('Shame.') There are 120,000 native troops, and latterly, owing to this war in Afghanistan, it is said they have been adding 15,000 more to their numbers; and there are 60,000 English troops who are said to be mainly kept there to watch the 120,000 native troops. (Laughter.) But there is a large Civil Service—that is, gentlemen who are magistrates in the various districts, and who collect the taxes. There are among them men of great merit and of great service, and many of them doubtless labour hard; but I suspect and believe that if an accurate account were taken it would be found that the payment of salaries and pensions which they received are more than double the amount which is paid to any equal number of persons similarly occupied in any other country in the world. To supply this service about thirty young gentlemen from this country, after passing through a collegiate examination, are sent out to India, to take places at salaries of £300 or £400 a year, which go on increasing, many of them to £1,000, £2,000, £3,000, and £4,000. They come back home when they are middle-aged, and they return to England a very much respected class of men. (Laughter.) You will observe that I have not assailed the Government; I leave them to the retribution which awaits them. They have played, in my view, falsely both with Parliament and with the country. They have wasted, and are now wasting, the blood and the treasure of our people. They have tarnished the mild reign of the Queen by needless war and slaughter on two continents, and by the menace of needless war in Europe; they have soiled the fair name of England by subjecting and handing over the population of a province which had been freed by Russia, through war and treaty, to the cruel and the odious government of the Turk. And beyond this they have shown, in my view, during an interval of five years through which they have been in possession of office and power, that they are imbecile at home and turbulent and wicked abroad. I leave them to the judgment of the constituencies of the United Kingdom, to which they must speedily appeal, and to the heavy condemnation which impartial history will pronounce upon them."

In a letter Mr. Bright wrote in June of 1879, in answer to questions asked him by one of his constituents, he referred to the depression in trade, saying:—

"As to the present depression of trade, we owe some of it to the bad harvests, which have impoverished many farmers, who are not an inconsiderable portion of our home-trade customers; we owe much of it to famines in India and China, and to the commercial and manufacturing distress which has prevailed in almost every country, and not least in those countries which have sought to secure themselves by high protective duties. If our harvest this year is unfavourable, I fear the recovery we all hope for will be delayed; if it is abundant, which seems not probable, we shall soon see, not symptoms only, but proofs of revival. In the United States, with a great harvest last year, trade is reviving. We followed them in their depression, but not to so deep a depth, and we shall follow them in their recovery. These great changes are not in the power of Congresses or Parliaments; they are in the ordering of nature, and we must accept them, always endeavouring not to aggravate them by our own follies. There is one great consolation in our present condition—the food of our people is cheap. But for the free imports the price of bread would be more than double, the price of sugar would be three times its present price, the price of cheese and bacon would be double, or nearly so, and of the price of labour it may be said that it would be much lessened by a greater prostration of every industry in the country not immediately connected with the growth of food. The freedom of our imports will enable us to pass through the present time of depression with less suffering than at any former period of disastrous seasons. As to Parliament and its inquiries, I have seen much of it and of them. If Parliament would keep out of foreign broils, if it would conduct the government of the country at an expenditure of sixty millions instead of eighty millions in the year; if it would devote its time and labours to questions of home interest rather than to those which involve the sacrifice of the blood and treasure of our people in remote lands, we might have hope and faith that Parliament could serve the nation in times of depression, and we should find that such times of suffering would visit us more rarely."

On the 25th of October a great Liberal demonstration took place in the Pomona Gardens, Manchester, when over 100,000 persons were present. Mr. R. N. Philips, M.P., presided in the hall, and meetings were held outside the building at the same time. The Marquis of Hartington addressed the vast meetings.

"We have heard lately a great deal of 'Imperial policy,' and of a 'great empire,'" said Mr. Bright during his speech. "These are phrases which catch the ignorant and unwary. Since this Government came into office, your great empire—upon the map—has grown much greater. They have annexed the islands of Fiji—(laughter)—they have annexed also the country of the Transvaal in South Africa, which is said to be as large as France. They have practically annexed the land of the Zulus, also in South Africa—and they have practically annexed—for it is now utterly disorganised, and they seem to be left alone to repair, if it is possible, the mischief they have made—they have practically annexed Afghanistan. They have added also to your dominions the island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean—(laughter)—and they have incurred enormous, incalculable responsibilities in Egypt and Asia Minor. All these add to the burdens, not of the Empire—just listen to this—they add to the burdens, not of the Empire in Canada or Australia—all these colonies have nothing to do, as a rule, with these things—they add to the burdens, not of the Empire, but of the 34,000,000 people who inhabit great Britain and Ireland. We take the burden and we pay the charge. This policy may lend a seeming glory to the Crown, and may give scope for patronage, and promotion, and pay, and pensions to a limited and favoured class; but to you, the people, it brings expenditure of blood and treasure, increased debt and taxes, and adds risk of war in every quarter of the globe. . . . Look on our position for one moment. You have to meet the competition of other countries; your own race on the American continent are your foremost rivals. Nobody denies that, I believe. They are fifty millions now, and happily for them they have not yet bred a Beaconsfield or a Salisbury—(laughter and cheers)—to misdirect their policy and to waste their resources. (Loud cheers.) If at some distant period, it may be centuries remote, an Englishman—one of that great English nation which is now so rapidly peopling the American continent—if such an Englishman should visit and explore the sources of his race, and the decayed and ruined home of his fathers, he may exclaim, 'How are the mighty fallen! whence comes this great ruin?' And the answer will be that in the councils of the England of the past—I pray that it may not be said in the days of a virtuous Queen—wisdom and justice were scorned, and ignorance, and passion, and vainglory directed her policy and wielded her power." (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

The ovation given to Mr. Bright when he rose to speak was most enthusiastic, and not an unworthy recompense for a life spent for the public good. Although at least 20,000 persons were in the hall, he was distinctly heard to the utmost limits of the building, and from the beginning to the end that mysterious sympathy which animates and draws together orator and hearers was perfectly maintained. It is one of Manchester's chief distinctions that Mr. John Bright represented her citizens in Parliament, and was associated with her in the movement which set England free from a mischievous fiscal system. While an "overflow meeting" was held in the open air outside, there was a continual call for "Bright," and he at last consented to speak to them. Appearing on a balcony, he was somewhat astonished by the vast sea of human faces, and remarked to the immense gathering that it was quite impossible for any one with ordinary human powers to address with any advantage the vast, the wonder-

ful audience, yet every word of his short speech was heard by even the outer circle of the multitude. The scene was very interesting and affecting. Although the large assembly tried to get as near as possible to the balcony, and were packed together in an uncomfortable mass, yet the dense crowd was respectfully deferential throughout the address. Up on the high balcony stood, with calm collected mien, a fine political veteran of stainless career, who had devoted the greater portion of his life to advancing the true interest of mankind, and whose liberties he has for ever widened. There he stood, in the evening calm, counselling his countrymen, who anxiously drank in every word he uttered, with eyes fixed on the lineaments of his face. He somewhat resembled the sun which was beautifully setting before him, pouring light all around, even upon the clouds that strove to dim its lustre. At the close of the speech the people were vociferous in their acknowledgment of the favour he had conferred upon them, and the kind expressions interchanged by strangers, betokened their admiration for the honest politician, whose whole life-study had been directed towards feeding the poor and raising the poverty-stricken masses. They were grateful, for while

"Others hail the rising sun,
They bowed to him whose course was run."

Upon the Prince of Wales visiting India, Mr. Disraeli proposed the grant to defray the expenses.

"I rose," said Mr. Bright, "for the purpose of saying that although I had some doubts, and although it is impossible to say and believe that the journey of the Prince of Wales will turn the current of feeling on great political questions in the minds of the natives of India, yet I think that in all probability by his conduct—his personal conduct—his kindness, his courtesy, his generosity, and his sympathy with that great people over whom it may at no distant period be his tremendous responsibility to rule, he may leave behind him memories that may be of exceeding value, and equal in influence to the greatest measures of State policy which any Government could propound."

Mr. Bright was the chairman at a conversazione given by Mr. Alderman Collings, the Mayor of Birmingham, on the 31st of October, to the teachers in all the elementary schools, and others engaged in educational work.

"It has been to me a subject not of wonder, but of grief, that I have been compelled to believe that there is hardly any effort so great—an effort made in any direction with so little results—as the effort which is made by the ministers and teachers of religion now," said Mr. Bright. "I have read one and heard another curious explanation of this from two eminent ministers. I read the opinion of one who was a great American divine. He said that as people got older there was not only an ossification of the outward man, but a hardness and bonyness that grew, and unless great care was taken, unless religion be pursued from youth, there was great fear that the spiritual man would also become ossified. It is to adults, too, that ministers

of the Gospel have generally to speak. The result is they have a material which is not plastic upon which they can make little impression; and I think there is nothing more to be lamented than the fact that ministers of religion produce so little effect upon those amongst whom they minister. But I heard another minister say that he found in his experience that very few persons who had not paid any special regard to religion by the time they became 30 years of age found it extremely difficult for the religious sentiment to be created in their mind at a later period in life. I will not argue about that; but I say the teachers in your schools are in an entirely different position. They have a material upon which they are able to impress their minds and sentiments, and although that plastic material may be moved, worked, and impressed for evil as well as for good, I hope the efforts of the great mass of the teachers in our schools tend infinitely more for good than for evil, knowing that they make a lasting impression upon the young minds with which they constantly come in contact. I must make another observation in which I am not sure the Mayor will agree, as I know he is very apt to criticise—(laughter)—and that is in regard to what we mean by education. It is not books alone. (Hear, hear.) It is not what is called the 'three R's,' though as a plain education in reading, writing, and arithmetic these are very good for the bulk of men, and they are probably sufficient for their work in life. It is not even classics and mathematics, of which, when I was young, I knew nothing, and of which I have not acquired any knowledge since. (Laughter and cheers.) I regard what are called the classics—that is, the ancient languages of Greece and Rome—as rather luxuries than anything else. It is a great luxury to know anything which is good and innocent. It is a great luxury to know a great deal of the past—not that it makes you more powerful, but it is a great pleasure to the person who knows. (Hear, hear.) But I do not believe myself that there is anything in the way of wisdom which is to be obtained in any of the books of the old languages which at this moment may not be found in books of our own literature. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, I think a man may be as great a man, and as good a man, and as wise a man knowing only his own language, and the wisdom in it, as the man who knows all the Latin and Greek books that were ever written. But I say there is another sort of education beyond that of books. I think Milton describes this sentiment. In speaking of some ancient person he speaks of him as 'deep versed in books but shallow in himself,' and there is no doubt that there are people who know almost everything that may be known in a library, and yet they will hardly make their way from one street to another." (Laughter.)

Mr. Bright presided at a large meeting of his townsmen in the Town Hall of Rochdale on the 18th of December, 1879, who had assembled to listen to an interesting address from Mr. T. B. Potter, their member, on his recent tour in the United States.

"There is, no doubt, a great difference between the United States and countries in Europe, with the exception of one great country—France," remarked Mr. Bright. "They differ from us in sobriety. It is quite true Mr. Potter said he saw only four drunken people in America. Well, but he did not see one emperor. Call it empress or king or queen, or imperial or royal—these institutions are not the foremost in America; and I have no doubt where men are not intelligent enough and moral enough to maintain a Government like what they have in the United States, they may in some particulars still possess great benefits. I think that Mr. Shawcross or Mr. Potter, or both perhaps, said that they had no great army. There are persons who come to England from Germany, France, and Russia, who are surprised, and perhaps delighted, to find so few soldiers here compared with some of the European nations. In America they disbanded their great army of a million of men; they have now a force of about 25,000 men. It is not maintained for the purpose of war abroad—nor is it maintained for the purpose of suppressing liberty at home; and yet there is no country which is more universally respected throughout the globe than the United States of America; and there is no country where, on the whole, the laws are better observed, and order more steadily maintained. Another thing in which they differ from us is this, they have, as I believe, almost no political treaties. Washington, their first great President, advised them to have no political treaties—commercial treaties if you like, as much trade as you can have with all countries. They have

not followed his advice in that so much as I should like; but in regard to political treaties, in the main they have followed his advice; and yet I believe there is no country with whom other countries are more friendly at this moment than the United States."

On the 20th of January, 1880, Mr. Bright was present at the ceremony of opening the Birmingham Liberal Club, and he alluded to the prospect of the dissolution of Parliament. Mr. R. Chamberlain, the Mayor, presided. Sir W. Harcourt was the first speaker, and he remarked:—

"You will not, I hope, believe me capable of the presumption of attempting to instruct Birmingham in politics in the presence of Mr. Bright—(cheers)—a statesman who, after forty years of public service, unsurpassed, unequalled, is still left to us, with eye undimmed, wisdom unclouded, eloquence unquenched, like some weather-beaten and battling cliff, a landmark of this English nation, and against whom the waves of faction have roared in vain."

Mr. Bright also spoke, and said:—

"Suppose that the present Prime Minister and his friends had been successful in preventing all the measures which they have strenuously opposed, what would have been the state of the country now, what the rate of wages, what the condition of content and loyalty? You would have had long before this chaos over the country, and anarchy, or that kind of calm which ultimately succeeds when anarchy has passed away. You would have had your aristocracy dead as they are politically dead in France; and more than that, I think it is highly probable that the English Crown, ancient and venerated as it is, if it had been subjected to the strain of fifty years more of Tory Government, would have at this moment been not worth more—if worth as much—as Mr. Turnerelli's wreath. (Loud laughter and applause.) And if the people of England allowed this Government, with an unchanged policy, or such a Government, to proceed twenty years longer, I would not give much for the institutions of this country, which the majority of the people value highly, but which we are sometimes told we do not think so much of as those to whom we are opposed. If this picture be true, is it not wise for young men, middle-aged men, all men, to connect themselves with the Liberal party in associations or clubs by which, by moral and just and honest means, the purposes of that party are intended to be promoted? Our duty, in my opinion, is to continue to work for these great objects. They are not all accomplished. There is much else to be done. Much has been done in fifty years. Those who from this platform, or from any other platform, can speak in fifty years to come, I hope that they may be able to show that they also have done their duty in their time—(cheers)—and that England, whether it boasts or not of being the centre of an empire on which the sun never sets, is an England with a population educated, well-fed, civilised, and enlightened—such a population as we can only have under a just and a moral Government. I believe that at home we have much to do. Now our eyes are directed to foreign countries, to wars afar off, to the sufferings of our countrymen there, and to the more appalling sufferings they are inflicting on the populations with which we are at war. (Hear, hear.) Our eyes and our attention have been diverted from our own immediate and real interests. It is for you, members of this club—for members of the Liberal party throughout the kingdom—to make up their minds that, at the hour, which is coming, there will be such a proclamation of opinion on the part of the universal constituencies that shall fix for ever the mark of their condemnation upon the policy of the last four or five years." (Loud cheering.)

Mr. W. E. Gladstone, in declining to continue to represent Greenwich in the House of Commons, remarked during his speech to his constituents:—

"I must go one step further, gentlemen, and say that I desire that yours, as a Liberal borough, should be represented to the greatest advantage. Now, I have not a tittle of reason or ground of complaint of any portion—or any reason to apprehend

any injustice from any portion—of the constituency. But you know that your borough comprises a very large extent of Government establishments, and I admit promptly that I have never been a friend of extended Government establishments, and I am a great deal more rigorous on the subject of public economy than is the fashion in the present day. (Cheers.) One of my consolations, I assure you, in the House of Commons upon those matters is to sit by my friend and your friend, Mr. Bright—(cheers)—and talk with him over bygone times. I will say of Sir Robert Peel, though I am a Liberal, or, as some say, a dangerous Radical—(laughter)—that I revere and love his memory, and I say it to his honour, that in those days public economy and retrenchment, and keeping down to a minimum the public establishments, was the motto which every politician found it necessary to profess in the face of the people of England. It is not so now, and I defy you now to select a candidate who has rigid notions on the subject, without very considerable disadvantage to the Liberal cause. That, gentlemen, is a consideration which has largely weighed with me.”

The annual *soirée* of the Birmingham Junior Liberal Association was held in the Town Hall of that town on the 22nd of January, 1880; and Mr. Bright, commenting on the Zulu and Afghan wars, said:—

“I believe all wars are savage and cruel; but I mean harsh and cruel wars on uncivilised or half-civilised men. When I read of transactions of that kind, something always puts to me this question, ‘What is it that makes, if anything makes, this needless and terrible slaughter different in its nature from those transactions which we call murder?’ Excuses had been made for these wars—excuses which were not justified by the facts—excuses that the Zulus had attacked Natal, which was absolutely and notoriously and entirely false. With regard to the Afghans, statements had been made very much of the same character, that they were going to throw in their influence with another and a northern power, and that they insulted outrageously the envoy sent to negotiate with them—all of which he believed there was not a particle of foundation for. At most, in regard to either of these peoples, the case was one of suspicion; but was it right, upon a mere suspicion, that a country like this should send, in the one case 20,000 and in the other 40,000 troops to invade territories, and to put to death not less perhaps than 20,000 men engaged in the defence of their own country, which in our case we considered honourable and needful? I believe it is not possible to condemn too strongly the policy by which the hard-earned treasure of your people is wasted, and by which the blood of your brethren, and those whom you are told to call your foes, is spilt. To-day is the anniversary of what they call the battle or the massacre of Isandlana, when I know not how many, but I suppose at least 1,500 men—officers, Englishmen, native troops, and I know not how many of the Zulus—were slaughtered. This is the anniversary of that sad day. Can any man show a justification for that transaction, or the compensation that we have received for the enormous and incalculable loss of that one day’s war? (Hear, hear.) At this moment, in the Afghan country—in a country, I am told, as large as France and as mountainous as Switzerland—you hear of the hanging of scores of men, you hear of villages burnt, of women and children turned out into the snow and the cold of this inclement season, and all done at the command of a Government and a people professing to be wiser, more intelligent, more humane, and more Christian than those upon whom these attacks are made. I say, let us abandon our pretensions: let us no longer claim to be Christian; let us go back to the heathen times, whilst we adhere to the heathen practices—(hear, hear)—let us no longer—as I see some of the leading men of this country have been doing within the past few weeks, at the opening of churches and at the laying of the foundation-stones of churches—join in all the apparent regard for the Christian religion. Take down, at any rate, your Ten Commandments from inside your churches, and say no longer that you read, or believe in, or regard the Sermon on the Mount. Abandon your Christian pretensions, or else abandon your savage and heathen practices.” (Loud applause.)

Mr. Bright and his colleagues addressed their constituents in the Birmingham Town Hall on the 24th of January, 1880.

Mr. Bright spoke chiefly on the subject of Ireland, and, in concluding a lengthy speech, said :—

“At present what the Irishman wants upon his farm more than all else is to get rid of suspicion; to get rid of the fear of injury, of uncertainty as to his tenure; to have infused into his mind the opposite feelings of confidence and of hope. (Cheers.) If you would give to all Irish tenants that confidence and hope, every year would see them advancing in a better cultivation and a more prosperous condition. Does anybody say that hope is nothing and of no avail in the affairs of men? I might quote from the poet who has—what shall I say?—created almost an immortality for our language. He speaks of hope. He says—

‘White-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings.’

(Loud cheers.) Bring this hope into the Irish farmer’s family, and into his household, and it will have an influence as complete, as blessed, and as home-ruling as it will have in the mansions of the rich or the palaces of the great. (Cheers.) So far as I have seen Irishmen in their own country and in this, they are as open to good and kind treatment as any other people. They have been the victims of untoward circumstances, which all your histories describe. We—our forefathers—have subjugated them and maltreated them. We suffer in reputation; they suffer in their lives through the misdoings of the past. Let us now not be weary of the attempt to bring about a reformation in that country, which, I believe, would quell the suspicion and quell the discontent, and banish the disloyalty which we all lament in Ireland. As to the present distress, I hope that the duty of the Government will not be neglected. I hope they have not spent so much in endeavouring to civilise Zulus and Afghans that they are not able to do something for their poor people nearer home. (Hear, hear.) I hope, Sir, the Government, in dealing with the Irish question, will deal with it frankly, and openly, and generously; and that they, as they are now under the pressure of the present distress, will open their hands to relieve the suffering people of the West—that they will open their hearts, and their intellects too, to the further and the greater question of what shall be done for Ireland in the future.” (Applause.)

Mr. Bright presided as chairman, in Union Chapel, Islington, on the 10th of February, 1880, on the occasion of a lecture delivered by the Rev. R. W. Dale on the “Rise of Evangelical Nonconformity.”

“Since the Reformation,” said Mr. Bright, in opening the proceedings, “we have had from the earliest period the Puritans, and following them, and much like them, their successors, the Nonconformist bodies of this country. We have had persecution enough in England; we all know it has not vanished altogether a long time from among us. (Cheers.) In the reign of Charles II., little over two centuries ago, there were in prison in this country not less than 4,000 persons, members of the small and inconsiderable sect of which I am a member. In twelve years of that time more than 8,000 were imprisoned, and more than 400 died in prison. In those days prisons were not like the prisons of our day. They were abodes in which men met with intolerable and disgusting conditions and sufferings, and in which they encountered maladies of the most dreadful character, and the welcome they gave to multitudes was merely the welcome of death. Now, in the year 1684—that is, not 200 years ago, not many lives back—I lost only the other day an old relative and connection of mine who had lived somewhat more than 100 years; if you take another life like that it brings you back to the point which I am referring to, viz., the year 1684, when William Penn says, referring to what was transacting in his time, ‘There have been ruined since the late King’s restoration’—that is Charles II.’s, for whom all Conformists were expected to give thanks for ever and ever—(cheers and laughter)—‘there have been ruined since the late King’s restoration about 15,000 families, and more than 5,000 persons died under bonds for matters of mere conscience to God.’ Well, we have had this persecution, but it never reached the point of extinction. Whatever was done, there was something either in the English people or in the English Constitution, or in the Protestant faith of those who were the persecutors,

which prevented their going the length to which Church and State went in France, and therefore Nonconformity in England was not extinguished; it was only persecuted, and, as far as law and practice could do it, degraded and insulted. For the last 100 years the Nonconformists of England have taken a very different position. They have been now for a long period the great advancing and reforming force in our English political life—(loud cheers)—and we must not forget, and we ought to acknowledge with thankfulness that there are large numbers of those who are not Nonconformists, but who are associated and worship with the Church of England, who have constantly and honestly co-operated with Nonconformists in all that they have done in favour of greater civil and religious freedom. (Cheers.) But yet, for all that, we must admit, and with sorrow, that even now the people of this country are parted into two great divisions—the Church and the Conformists on one side, the Dissenters and Nonconformists on the other. There seems to me a strange and a painful misfortune in this to the country at large, that there should be suspicion to a great extent, dislike to a great extent, enmity, I sometimes fear, to some extent, between large classes of persons professing to believe and to practise the religion of Christ. And why is it so? In fact, I know not why the Church should so dread Dissent and hate it and despise it. There is no difference in doctrine or in practice—I mean in the rites of Church arrangement—which can justify the feelings which exist too much between Churchmen and Dissenters in our country and in our time. What has Dissent done? If I were a Churchman I think I should sometimes ask myself that question. I have heard of an eminent Bishop, who, describing a parish, said that there were only two things in it to be lamented—the beerhouses and the Dissenters. (Laughter.) That good Bishop believed, no doubt—I will not say that a Dissenting chapel was as injurious as a beerhouse, but still that it interfered with the harmony of his parish. Those who went to the chapel did not go to hear him. I recollect a clergyman I once met some years ago, from Warwickshire, who professed to be very liberal on this matter. He said he should not object at all to the Dissenters going to their own place of worship in the evening if they would go to his church in the morning. (Much laughter.) I do not know whether he considered that was a case of bane and antidote, or what light he considered it in. But I said, ‘As you are so liberal with regard to them, would you have any objection yourself occasionally to go to the Dissenting chapel?’ But he said that was a very different question. (Renewed laughter.) He fell back upon what he called his orders, his apostolical succession—(cheers)—and it was impossible for him to make that condescension to the Dissenters which he thought it right the Dissenters should make to him. I am surprised that men who are good and cultivated, and whom one supposes to know a good deal of the world, should think that beerhouses on the one side and Dissenting chapels on the other are proper to be mentioned in the same sentence. (Hear.) As to the bishops, one might say a good deal about them. (Laughter.) . . . But when there come questions on the sacrifice of tens of thousands of lives in distant and remote countries, they who come down, or say they come down, from Christ’s own Apostles, sit there with all the dignity of great office about them, and not one of them in that House opens his mouth to condemn the transaction which in his own home and in his own soul I cannot but believe he must emphatically condemn. (Cheers.) . . . If I were a Churchman myself, and I suppose it is very much a matter of accident that I am not—(laughter)—if they had not imprisoned my forefathers for many years in Bedford Gaol, for anything I know I might have been a Churchman now—I hope I should at least have had that sense of honour and of justice which would have enabled me to look around and behold all the great works of the great Nonconformist body in England and to regard it with admiration and honour.” (Cheers.)

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE LIBERALS AGAIN IN POWER.

Dissolution of Parliament—Liberal Victory—Mr. Bright once more Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—Capital Punishment—Visit to Stratford-on-Avon—The Burials Bill—Lord Rector of Glasgow University—Address from France, Holland, and Germany—Mr. Gladstone's Irish Land Bill—Mr. Bright's Seventieth Birthday—At Rochdale—Bright Laying the Foundation Stone of the First Board School at Llandudno—His Annual Address to his Constituents in January, 1882—Speech in the House on the Rules of Procedure—His Opinion upon Libraries.

ON the 8th of March the dissolution of Parliament was announced in both Houses. The recent representatives of Birmingham were opposed by the Hon. A. C. G. Calthorpe and Major Burnaby in the Conservative interest. Mr. Bright arrived in Birmingham on the 19th of March, and was lustily cheered by a large crowd that had assembled to welcome him. The Town Hall that evening was densely crowded by Liberals. Mr. Jaffray presided. When Mr. Bright was called upon to address the meeting, he was received with a great burst of enthusiasm, which was continued for several minutes. He said :—

"We were now witnessing the dying hours of the worst of modern Parliaments, and beholding the spectacle of the worst of Administrations being brought up for judgment. He contended that they owed the inestimable blessings which they were now privileged to enjoy to the foresight, judgment, and indefatigable labours of the Liberal party. He pointed out that the Conservative party had systematically opposed all efforts at reform, and had obstructed instead of advancing the attainment of results at which good legislation had aimed during the past half century. In the last six years—we will not go further back—in the last six years you had no considerable, if indeed any, liberal measures," said Mr. Bright. "You have had, as you know, an extravagance unknown for many years. You have had increasing debt and increasing taxes, and if you have not paid off all that you owe it will have to be paid by somebody some day. This Government came in with a purse full with £8,000,000. They go out with a purse not only empty but £8,000,000 to the bad. ('Shame.') Instead of dealing economically with your resources, extending your freedom, doing everything they could to encourage your industry, they have been marauding over half the world. (Loud and prolonged cheers.) England, the mother of free nations, herself the origin of free Parliaments—England has been supporting oppression in Turkey—('Shame')—and has been carrying fire and sword into remote territories in South Africa and in Afghanistan. ('Shame.') Will you entrust your power in the future—('No, no')—to men who have thus dealt with your interests, not in the remote past, but in the near past and in the present? ('No.') No; if you can find them, give your power to men who would be generous at home, and just and moral, and, so far as was in their power, peaceful abroad. I think it is time to adopt the words of one of our best poets, who says :—

"Tis time

To snatch their truncheons from the puny hands
Of statesmen, whose infirm and baby minds
Are gratified with mischief, and who spoil,
Because men suffer it, their toy, the world."

The vast audience passed a vote of confidence in the three members.

The day after, a deputation from the Licensed Victuallers of Birmingham waited upon Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain.

"I do not suppose that it (the Liberal party) will deal with any severity in any way with you," said Mr. Bright in reply to them; "whenever it does deal with the liquor question—if it ever does deal with it—you may depend upon it, it is the last party in the country that will ever do anything that will be in a pecuniary sense unjust to your interests. What it deprives you of in the public interest, it will at any rate compensate you for, and endeavour to do justice, as it does to the whole country and to every interest. You may depend upon it, it will not be unjust to the licensed victuallers and those who are concerned in the sale of those things which, unfortunately, here it appears necessary in some degree to control."

Mr. Bright addressed two meetings on the 23rd, and was honoured with a torchlight procession through the streets, accompanied with bands of music. The day after he again spoke at Cave's Auction Mart on the necessary reforms in the land laws, and he related that Mr. Martin, the strong Nationalist, once came up to him at the door of the House of Commons and said, "I have watched your public conduct, and I have seen that you have never said one single word that was offensive, or unkind, or unjust to my country; and I wish to shake you by the hand and to tell you so."

Mr. Bright delivered another speech to the electors on the 29th of March:—

"It is one of the things I used to complain of myself when I held office in Mr. Gladstone's Government," said Mr. Bright. "I used to say what an extraordinary thing that the Governments of this country always spent so much time about foreign affairs, many of them of no importance to us, and spend comparatively so little time about our home affairs; and I believe if we could have an accurate account of all the Governments of England have done—the Ministers, the Cabinets—during the last hundred years or more, we should find that nine-tenths of that time, thought, and labour had been devoted to matters abroad, connected with wars, conquests, annexation, gunpowder and glory, and perhaps not more than one-tenth had been expended upon the true interests of England. Do you think that if this country had been more at peace, if its resources had been more husbanded, that it would have been left to the period of Mr. Gladstone's Government, within the last ten years, to have built these magnificent schools that I see all over your town? ('Never.') If you will take the history of the last hundred years, and look for the names of what are called great men that were in Parliament and in your public service, you will find that their time was taken up with things far remote from the interests—the true interests—of England, and scarcely a man of them ever raised his voice in favour of a system of education which would bring you labouring men, artisans as you are, with your 20s., 30s., or 40s. a week, to a condition of intelligence, and a condition of virtue, and a condition of comfort infinitely higher than you ever yet attained to. (Cheers.) Now, I am for a policy of peace—(hear, hear, and cheers)—and for a policy of retrenchment—(hear, hear)—and for a policy of reform; and if every country, and all Parliaments, and all statesmen, and all potentates would give their attention, their minds, and their intelligence to the wellbeing of their country, you may depend upon it the world would be more at peace, and all people would be more contented and more happy, and you would not have the terrible events you read of sometimes in Russia, sometimes in Germany; you would not have all Europe covered with soldiers, and its people burdened with

military exactions which impoverish them and drive them to courses which are desperate and wicked, it may be to desperate means, because the people have so little consideration and justice shown them.

"Now, you would suppose from that manifesto," said Mr. Bright, in a speech to the electors, on the 28th of March, "that there was nothing so much from the heart of the Prime Minister as binding Great Britain and Ireland together by the bond of true sympathy and true interest; and I take the liberty of telling you what many of you must know, that for the last two hundred years the Tory party has had much of its own way in Ireland. During much of that time, or at least for one hundred years, the penal laws existed, and were most oppressive and most cruel, and those laws were only mitigated, not abolished. During the time of the American war, when this country was endeavouring to reconquer the colonies, it was found necessary in some degree to conciliate the Irish people, and those penal laws were modified. Up to the year 1829—a time which many here can remember—no Roman Catholic could sit in the House of Commons, and it was only when Ireland was on the point of civil war, as the Duke of Wellington admitted, that Catholic emancipation was conceded to the Catholic population of Ireland. (Cheers.) And is it to be wondered at, then, that the Tory party, having been, as I think, the enemy of the freedom of Ireland for so long, is thus met by a corresponding feeling on the part of the Irish, who, with little exception, have a constant and bitter animosity against the Tory party in this country? (Cheers.) So we come now to this kind of conclusion with regard to the present Government, that they are an Administration which, during six years, have made no progress in England, and they have done nothing to create peace and contentment in Ireland, and so long as the Tory party and Administration are in power I believe there will be no progress in England, and there will be no settled contentment in the sister country. (Applause.) Before I conclude I must say a few words upon a question which, in this manifesto, is especially referred to your consideration, and that is the foreign policy of the Government. They boast—this Government boast, its orators in various parts of the country boast—that they have preserved the peace of Europe. Well, you know that the peace of Europe was not preserved, that Russia and Turkey engaged in a desperate and sanguinary conflict; and you know more, that the only reason why this Government did not go into war was because all England, and all Scotland, had risen in condemnation of the Government which had permitted the massacres in Bulgaria. All Great Britain and Ireland, too, declared that no Government of this country should go into war in defence of a country or a Government which perpetrated such horrors upon a subject people—(loud applause)—and as they were not permitted to go to war with Russia, still, such was the appetite for mischief, that, not going into one war, they plunged almost immediately afterwards into two, which they called little wars. ('Shame.') In South Africa was a nation, a small nation, I know not what its whole population was, but probably not a population equal to that of the town of Birmingham. They never molested us. They had lived for twenty or thirty years alongside the English colony of Natal, and had never shown a disposition to inflict upon them the smallest injury. This Government made war upon them. I will not speak of the two or three thousand persons in the English troops who were destroyed. I suppose their mothers, and widows, and sisters, and daughters lament their loss. I lament, at any rate, if they were to die, that they did not die in a nobler and a better cause—(cheers)—but I speak of the 10,000 men—courageous, loyal men of the Zulu nation, who, if they had been of our nation, would have had songs written in their honour and magnificent orations delivered in their praise, and their leading men who fell would have found, no doubt, a home for their bones and a tablet in Westminster Abbey. (Cheers.) That war was not enough. Another was prepared, by the most ingenious and the most treacherous course of conduct, in Afghanistan. It was a war begun in the dark, carried on in secret by a diplomacy which was denied in both Houses of Parliament, and was falsely denied. (Hear, hear.) It was begun against the evidence and opinion of the venerated Lord Lawrence—(cheers)—against the opinion and experience of Lord Northbrook; against the counsel of the Governor-General of India; against the Indian Council in London; against the counsel of all the sensible and just men who heretofore have been thought the greatest authorities upon Indian questions—(cheers)—and it ended, as, of course, we all know it must end, when a powerful nation like this, with the wonderful ingenuity of armed instruments which it possesses, comes into conflict with a half-civilised people, in a slaughter of Afghans, I dare say, quite equal, but perhaps exceeding, that which had been inflicted upon the Zulus in South Africa. Now, at this moment

in that country what do you find? It is a country which is said to be as large as France and as mountainous as Switzerland. Throughout the whole of that country we have raised up a spirit of anarchy. There is no governor. The Ameer went away and died; his successor is a prisoner in our hands in India. There is no ruler in that country; there will be contenders for the throne, and so things may be for months or years in that country, of whose population not one man ever did anything whatsoever to insult or to injure us. Yet our Government, by its policy, has carried anarchy, and war, and slaughter, and fire throughout the whole of that country. You know something of the untold miseries, at least you may judge from what you have read of the untold miseries, which war brings upon men and women and little children; but there is one point that nobody, so far as I know, has ever touched upon, that which has always had a certain interest with me, and which has excited my sympathy. I have seen in some of the narratives of the Afghan war that all the region round had been swept for camels as beasts of burden for the forces. What became of the camels? The least number I have heard it put at was 30,000—it has been reckoned that as high as 40,000 or 50,000 camels have perished in these expeditions. One of our greatest poets, in a beautiful stanza, has one line where he says, 'Mute the camel labours with the heaviest load,' and though the camel is not able, by any voice of his, to make protest or complain, yet the burdened, overdriven, exhausted, dying beast—I cannot but believe that even the cruelties inflicted upon him will be found written upon imperishable tablets by the recording angel. (Cheers.) Well, now, that is the sort of Government that we condemn. (Hear, hear.) Do not tell me that we are Englishmen, the citizens of a free country, that these enormities may be conducted by our Government at the farthest ends of the earth, and that we are bound to bow down and submit to the guilt being laid upon our shoulders and our souls. (Cheers.) I blame the Government, as you blame them, and the more you examine what they have done, the more you trace their career the more you will blame them for their incapacity at home, where our interests have been neglected. Ireland, as I have shown, has been uncared for and insulted, and is driven constantly by neglect to discontent and disloyalty. Now, if they have thus neglected our interests at home, abroad they have carried terror and anarchy and murder over the wide regions of two continents—(hear, hear)—and two gentlemen have come down to Birmingham—(A voice: 'And they will go back again')—whose only plea before you, whose argument for your support, is purely and simply because they support this terrible wickedness of those needless wars abroad. (Cheers.) Well, on Wednesday next the inhabitants of Birmingham—the 63,000 electors of this great central city of the kingdom—will have an opportunity of declaring whether they are willing to share in the guilt of the transactions which I have so inadequately described. ('No, no.') You will have to give then your final verdict. You must say whether you will drive from their places of power statesmen whose tenure of office has been marked by astounding incapacity at home, and not less astounding blundering and guilt in their policy and their action abroad." (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

The election resulted in 22,969 votes being tendered for Mr. Muntz, 22,079 for Mr. Bright, 19,544 for Mr. Chamberlain, 15,735 for Major Burnaby, and 14,308 for the Hon. A. C. G. Calthorpe, and the Liberals were once again victorious in this their stronghold. A wave of Liberal success it was found had passed all over the United Kingdom, for 349 Liberals were returned, whereas the Conservatives only numbered 243, and the Home Rulers 60. Mr. W. E. Gladstone was consequently called upon by Her Majesty to form a Ministry, and he undertook to discharge the duties of the double office of Premier and Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Bright accepted office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The other members of the Cabinet were:—Lord Chancellor, Lord Sel-

borne; Lord President of the Council, Earl Spencer; Lord Privy Seal, Duke of Argyll; Foreign Secretary, Earl Granville; Secretary for India, the Marquis of Hartington; Home Secretary, Sir W. Vernon Harcourt; Colonial Secretary, Earl of Kimberley; War Secretary, Mr. Childers; First Lord of the Admiralty, the Earl of Northbrook; Chief Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Forster; President of the Local Government Board, Mr. Dodson; and President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Chamberlain.

A few months afterwards, commenting on the new Parliament, Mr. Bright said:—

“During the thirty-seven years that I have been a member of the House of Commons, I have had very considerable experience in that House, and I say again that there never has been a Parliament in my time to which the country had a greater right to look for important efforts of legislation, and if the House and the country will behave with moderation and wisdom, they will find the present Ministry not unworthy of the confidence they have placed in them.”

An American, commenting on the event, remarked:—

“The area of the globe over which the result was looked for with eager anxiety was, of course, very great, and illustrates strikingly the vastness of the empire. But what gives a touch of splendour to the Liberal victory is that whole races in the East have seen it as a great light. To every Christian still groaning under Turkish rule, it means speedy help and deliverance. To the Christians lately emancipated, and to the Greeks, it means the consolidation and maintenance of their freedom and independence. To the Hindoos it means government for their own sake, and not for the gratification of foreign pride. For the Afghans it means a cessation of pillage and slaughter in aid of a ‘scientific frontier.’ To the Turk it means that he must be clean and honest and industrious, or die.”

Mr. Bright had an audience at a council at Windsor Castle on the 28th of April with the Queen, who delivered to him the seals of office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, after he had made the usual affirmation.

The new Parliament met at the close of April, 1880, and the members were soon called upon to decide whether Mr. Bradlaugh, who had been elected to represent Northampton, should be allowed to make an affirmation of allegiance instead of taking the oath. A lengthy and excited discussion followed. Mr. Bright urged that the point that ought to be discussed was simply a question of right and law, and not with reference to religious views, and spoke eloquently on the subject several times.

“I am here,” said Mr. Bright, “as the defender of what I believe to be the principles of our constitution, of the freedom of constituencies to elect, and of the freedom of the elected to sit in Parliament. That freedom which has been so hardly won, I do not believe the House of Commons will endeavour to wrest from our constituencies, knowing by what slow steps we have reached the point we have now attained; and I do not believe that on the recommendation of the hon. member for Portsmouth they will turn back and deny the principles which have been so dear to them.”

The House decided by a majority against Mr. Bradlaugh, and orders were given forbidding him to enter the House, and he was forcibly removed on attempting to gain admittance.

The University College Debating Society held their annual debate on the 2nd of June, and Mr. Bright occupied the chair. The subject for debate was "Capital Punishment."

"What can be more remarkable than this, that you should have a punishment which is so outrageous that in many cases the authorities dare not inflict it?" remarked Mr. Bright, in the course of his speech. "Half of those convicted are not executed, and that is one of the great reasons why, in this strange uncertainty of the punishment, there can be no doubt that the punishment is less deterrent than it would otherwise be. You can never make it more deterrent, because you cannot make it more certain. If juries will, as Christian men, lean to the side of mercy rather than severity—even the prosecuting counsel, to his honour be it said, will not attempt to stretch his case against the prisoner, but is himself only too delighted if the verdict of the jury will allow the prisoner to leave the dock—and even if the jury may convict and the judge sentence, you have then, in all cases, except that of some miserable and poor wretch, who always excites my sympathy and horror, the friends of the prisoner, who, if there be any circumstances connected with the case favourable to the exercise of mercy, bring them before the Home Secretary; and Home Secretaries are not all alike, not all equally considerate, and, I fear, not all equally sensitive. But still Home Secretaries, as a rule, during the whole of my recollection, which goes back for nearly forty years, have always shown themselves willing to listen to facts and reason, and, I believe, are always well pleased that they are able to recommend a permanent commutation of the sentence. Why, I have seen a Home Secretary, when I have been asking him not to inflict capital punishment in a particular case, burst into tears and speak like a child, sobbing with the intense pain which it gave him to execute to the full that which the law required of his office. (Cheers.) So you will see I am not saying anything against the Home Secretaries. But this I will say, that I am amazed that any man should undertake that office with that responsibility attached, and I am astonished that we never had a Home Secretary rise in his place in the House of Commons and state that, from the experience of his office, the time was approaching when the country could be governed, and life and property preserved, without the infliction of the penalty of hanging. Now, there is another point, and that is the strange and terrible inequality of the punishment. If you will do as I have done, watch the cases of murder which are tried in the country, you will find that they differ from each other as much as any two crimes can differ. There are the murders through sudden passion, murders through jealousy and drink, through excitement and street broils, and which are committed by persons on the very verge of insanity, and then there is the murder deliberated and long calculated, done with systematic intent, and which makes you wonder at the kind of man who has been guilty of it, and yet your law gives exactly the same punishment in all of these cases. There are, indeed, some cases where the juries acting sometimes—in my opinion not nearly often enough—relieve the judge of the necessity of passing sentence of death by bringing in a sentence of manslaughter, in consequence of the excessive provocation which has caused the deed of blood. I brought before the House of Commons the case of a young man who was hanged at Glasgow, and I stated in the House of Commons that the hanging of the man was a far greater crime in the sight of Heaven and of man than the crime for which he was hanged. He had an excellent character. The offence arose out of a mere street disturbance. This young man and some who were with him were returning from some jovial party, and he took up a hoe standing near, and with no more idea of committing murder than I have at this moment swung this hoe round and cut the unfortunate man just behind the ear. If it had taken him on the shoulder it would have done him no serious harm, but it touched him on a vital spot, and the blow soon afterwards proved fatal. At the very time that the man was being tried there was another man tried at the same assizes—a pitman in a colliery who had murdered a fellow-pitman, and who had pulled down large stones and rolled them upon his victim to make it appear that he had been killed by the falling of a part of the roof. Both these men were found guilty. What happened? When everybody was expecting that the boy

of twenty, whose crime was so much less in extent, would be respited, the respite came down for the other man, in whose favour no person in Glasgow had made any reference whatever. As far as I can learn, nobody expected that the law would have been enforced in his case, and it was, indeed, believed in Glasgow that the wrong man had been respited. It may be so. I recollect speaking to a minister of the Free Church of Scotland, then in Glasgow, who told me that the population of Glasgow when they heard that the young man was to be put to death were aghast. Soon afterwards, when I made this statement in the House of Commons, I received a letter from a person living in the village where the father of the youth came from, and he said I did not know the whole calamity to the family, for such was the effect of the terrible strain upon the aged father that he only lived a fortnight after the death of his son. Now, these are not solitary cases. If any person will follow the criminal business of this country from assize to assize as I have done for many years, he will find that the stories are of the most terrible character, showing the terrible injustice done by our laws."

Mr. Bright, on the 28th of July, distributed the prizes to the successful scholars at Trinity College School, Stratford-on-Avon. A very numerous audience was present. The proceedings commenced with recitations in Greek, French, and English, alternated with glees, admirably rendered by the school glee club, and instrumental music by two of the pupils. The Rev. A. W. Beaven, M.A., head-master of Preston Grammar School, then read the report of the examination he had lately conducted, and stated that he had much pleasure in being able to congratulate the masters on the excellent state of the school, as proved by his examination. He also said that this was the fourth year in which he had acted as examiner, and that he was able to testify to a steady advance in the accuracy and scholarship of the pupils.

The Warden, Richard F. Curry, M.A., after having returned thanks to Mr. Beaven for his careful and conscientious examination, and after having expressed his gratitude to his assistant masters for their hearty co-operation during the past year, then read the list of honours and scholarships won by the school since the last speech-day, and concluded his remarks by calling on Mr. Bright to distribute the prizes.

The right hon. gentleman, who was vociferously cheered on rising, then gave away the books, making a few appropriate remarks to each recipient, amongst whom was his youngest son, who received the prize for modern languages.

Mr. Bright took part in the discussion on the Hares and Rabbits Bill on the 10th of August, when the House was in committee upon the subject. It will be remembered that during the Anti-Corn Law agitation he directed his attention to the grievance, and ever since that time, had always taken advantage of any opportunity to assist in altering the old obnoxious laws, which were unjust to the farmers, and the cause of so much crime and suffering.

On the 12th of August, Mr. Osborne Morgan, in his first speech from the Treasury bench, moved the second reading of the Burials Bill. Mr. Bright, in speaking again on behalf of the Bill, said :—

“With regard to that, I was going to follow a question mentioned by my hon. friend the member for Brighton, that this Bill will not move in the direction of disestablishment so far as to alienate any members of the Church. That question does not depend upon trifling matters of this kind. The public of this country will in due time solve it. Perhaps they will determine for generations to maintain the Church as it is. Perhaps not. I am quite willing to leave that question to the determination of my countrymen. But when church rates were enforced, when people came to my father’s house, and took a handful of silver spoons for them; do you suppose that that was likely to allure me to the Established Church? Well, now, with regard to this question, just examine it in the same way. What are the sentiments of the people, men and women, and all persons, with regard to the spot of ground where their nearest relatives lie buried? What does a man think of the little spot where his wife lies, the widow of the spot where her husband lies, the parents where some innocent children, that have been taken from them, lie, or the children, when they remember the place where their parents are buried? Is there not an attachment to that place, a sympathy with it, something that one can never express in words, beyond what you will find in the minds of all of us with regard to any other spot of ground on the face of the earth? (Cheers.) I know a very old man (Mr. Oldham, who in his younger days was Mr. Bright’s gardener); I think he is ninety. I think he boasts he is the oldest man in the town in which I live, and he was as proud of his age as it is possible to be. I have heard that he, after the loss of his wife, perhaps twenty years ago, walked two miles every Sunday for years to the cemetery where his wife was buried. There he went to think of her he had lost, to shed a tear probably over her grave, or to offer a prayer that their separation was only temporary, and that as he grew older the time during which they would be separated would be every day shortened. Well if this grave was in one of your churchyards, and if he were a Dissenter, his affection for that place of burial would be just as great as if it had been a cemetery or in a dissenting chapel yard, and you would find that he would visit it, his affections would linger round it; he would be, no doubt, lured time after time to visit the burial place and enter your church; and if he did not become a member of your Church and one of your constant congregation it would be absolutely impossible that he could be hostile to it. (Cheers.) Now I put that before you as an argument. Instead of being a measure of disestablishment it will lessen what feeling of hostility prevails, and in cases such as I have described—and there will be thousands of them every year—(hear, hear)—there will be set up a tie between persons who have been strangers to the Established Church which would bring them nearer, and it may be unite many of them to your constant congregation. (Hear.) I submit that as one reason why we should not be alarmed at the passing of this Bill.”

The second reading was carried by a majority of one hundred and seventy-nine votes, and ultimately the measure became law.

On the 26th of August, in the discussion on the Irish estimates, Mr. Bright delivered a speech, which produced a great effect upon the House :—

“The condition of Ireland, everybody must admit, is deplorable,” said Mr. Bright, “and it has been deplorable as long as I have had my attention turned to it, or been able to examine it. I travelled a good deal in Ireland many years ago, and from that time to this I have held very much the same opinion with regard to the condition of that country, and the necessity of a large and fundamental change with regard to the ownership and tenure of land. (Hear, hear.) The precise question before us now is that of the Irish constabulary, and I agree with a good deal that has been said with regard to the force. It is a different force from anything we have in this country for the preservation of peace, but it seems to be, in the present condition of Ireland, almost a necessary incident, and the fact that it is necessary, if it

be necessary, is a proof of how much there is required to be done to change the whole social condition of the great mass of the tenantry of Ireland—(cheers)—and the debate to-night is not got up with the idea of preventing this vote being passed."

Mr. Bright was elected Lord Rector of Glasgow University on the 15th of November, in succession to Mr. Gladstone. Mr. Ruskin had been nominated in opposition to Mr. Bright by the Conservative students, but he received only 814 votes, whereas Mr. Bright was elected by 1,128. The victory was celebrated by the students by a torchlight procession through the streets of Glasgow.

On the 16th of November Mr. Bright was present at a large meeting of his constituents. Mr. Chamberlain was the chairman.

"I recollect some years ago making an observation, I believe on this very platform, about the House of Lords," said Mr. Bright, in referring to the rejection by the House of Lords of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, adding, "I said in my opinion an hereditary House of Legislature could not be a permanent institution in a free country. (Loud cheers.) Some time after that, when Lord Palmerston was forming a Government, he was urged by Lord John Russell to offer offices in his Cabinet to Mr. Cobden and myself. You recollect that Mr. Cobden was then in America, and the office which Mr. Chamberlain now holds was reserved for him, when he should return to this country. He returned, but did not feel at liberty to accept it. Lord John Russell wrote to me, and explained the reason why Lord Palmerston found that he could not ask me to join his Government; and it was this—that I had expressed opinions, or an opinion, about an institution in this country, which the country thought important and essential, and that there were persons whose support was necessary to his Government, who told him that that support would be withheld if I became a member of his Administration. Well, I should have uttered no menaces—a foolish thing for me to do—against the House of Lords; but if I were particularly anxious that the House of Lords should endure as long as the sun and the moon, I should say it would be much better to have some regard for the interests and sufferings of the population of Ireland than to rush up in a crowd and reject a measure which those entrusted with the Administration of the country declared, upon their authority and their conscience, to be necessary for the peace of the nation. (Loud applause.) . . . Force is not a remedy. (Cheers.) There are times when it may be necessary, and when its employment may be absolutely unavoidable; but, for my part, I should rather regard and discuss measures of relief as measures of remedy than measures of force, whose influence is only temporary, and in the long run, I believe, is disastrous. (Cheers.) I don't now refer to some of the remedies you have heard of—violent and impossible schemes, where tenants are apparently to fix their own rents, under which, as a body, the landlords are to be got rid of and banished; or where the Government is to undertake some gigantic transaction—raising two or three hundreds of millions of money to buy them out of their estates, and to convey the estates over to the farmers who now cultivate them. Now, I believe that the extravagant, and the impossible, and the unjust is not required even in a case so serious, it may be so desperate, as this. Those propositions, which no Government can listen to, which no people can submit to—those propositions, depend upon it, are made by men who in their hearts hate England much more than they love the farmers of their own country."

In March, 1881, M. Buisson, a French journalist residing in London, presented to Mr. Bright, at his residence at Piccadilly, a memorial on behalf of a number of the leading French Liberals, on the subject of the Transvaal war. About thirty members of the French Senate signed it, as well as Deputies and members of the Paris Municipal Council and the French

Academy. The memorial bore the signatures of M. Victor Hugo, M. Ernest Renan, M. Legouv  , M. Carnot, and M. Scheurer-Kestner. Mr. Bright, in reply, wrote the following letter :—

“I was glad to have the opportunity of speaking to you yesterday, during your short visit, when you presented to me an address on the subject of the Transvaal war from the eminent French Liberals whose names I find appended to it. They have done me great honour in selecting me as in any manner worthy to be considered a representative of the friends of ‘international justice, peace, and goodwill between nations.’ I accept the address with much pleasure, and I can ask now to be permitted to rejoice with them in the happy settlement of a difficulty and of a conflict which has excited in their minds, as in mine, so deep a grief. I believe the English people will gladly sustain a Government which has restored peace by a course at once magnanimous and just, and I feel entire confidence that its policy will be approved in all foreign countries by ‘friends of international justice, peace, and goodwill between nations.’ I ask you to convey to the eminent Frenchmen who have signed the address my warm thanks for the great compliment they have paid me.”

An international address, which had received numerous signatures in Holland, Germany, Hungary, France, and Italy, was forwarded to Mr. Bright in March by Mr. Karl Blind, to whom the right hon. gentleman replied :—

“Dear Sir,—I thank you for the memorial you have forwarded to me, and for the friendly letter from yourself on the sad question of the Transvaal difficulty. I hope the prospect is one of peace, and not of further war, and that an arrangement may be made satisfactory to the Transvaal people, and honourable to this country. I scarcely need to assure you that whatever influence I possess is being, and will be, exerted in favour of peace. The conflict is one in which England can gain nothing, not even military glory, which is the poorest kind of glory, in my view, which men and nations strive for. I hope the time may come when nations will seek and obtain honourable renown by deeds of mercy and justice.”

On the 31st of March, Mr. Duncan McLaren, who for fifteen years had represented Edinburgh in Parliament, and who, from his constant attendance in the House, and his perfect mastery of all Scotch subjects, was jokingly known as “the member for Scotland,” was presented with an address by his former colleagues, on the occasion of his resignation in favour of the Lord Advocate. The ceremony took place in one of the committee-rooms up-stairs, in the presence of all the Scotch members and a sprinkling of Englishmen, including Mr. McLaren’s brothers-in-law—Mr. John Bright and Mr. Jacob Bright; his two sons—the Lord Advocate for Scotland and Mr. Charles McLaren, the member for Stafford—were also present, as was also Mrs. McLaren. The scene was impressive and interesting.

In January, 1881, the Government found that the disturbed and lawless condition of Ireland was such that they were forced to bring forward a Coercion Bill. Mr. Bright was twitted by some of the Irish members with inconsistency, and in a speech he delivered on the 28th of January, he said :—

"That with regard to former repressive measures he had never denied their necessity, but he had complained that they were not accompanied by remedial measures, and that no case of grievance was admitted. So, he added, if this Bill had stood alone, and if it were not notorious that it was to be accompanied by a large remedial measure for the admitted grievances of Ireland, he would not be sitting on the Treasury bench at that moment. . . . It has always been my wish, in anything that I have said in the last thirty years, never to cast a slight or a stigma or a slur upon your people. I could spend a few minutes in dwelling upon the virtues of the Irish people, and I believe their offences and their crimes and their vices arise rather from the condition into which those who should be their superiors have brought them—(loud cheers)—than from their own hearts. No, Sir, in our agitation there was no language, no teaching in favour of any crimes, any outrage, any terror. I call to witness every man who remembers the time that our speeches, strong as they might be, condemnatory as they might be of the law which we condemned, hostile as they were to the landowners, were still always conceived in a moral and an elevated tone, and directed the people to their own political friends, and to the element of justice in Parliament, to seek the remedy for their grievances. (Cheers.) But what have these gentlemen done? They have to a large extent demoralised the people whom they profess to befriend." (Loud and continued cheering.)

The Bill, after a lengthy discussion, passed through both Houses, and became law.

Mr. Gladstone introduced the Irish Land Bill on the 7th of April.

"Justice, Sir, is to be our guide," said the Premier. "It has been said that love is stronger than death, and so justice is stronger than popular excitement, than the passion of the moment, than even the grudges and resentments and sad traditions of the past. Walking in that path we cannot err. Guided by that light—that Divine light—we are safe. Every step we make upon our road is a step that brings us nearer to the goal, and every obstacle, even although it seems for the moment insurmountable, can only for a little while retard, and never can defeat, the final triumph."

On the 19th of April, Lord Beaconsfield, after three weeks' illness, expired at his residence in Curzon Street, London, at the age of 77. For the last six years of his life he filled the dignified position of Prime Minister with all but absolute sway. His whole career was very remarkable and instructive.

"It cannot be denied that he exercised a singular fascination over all who were brought into contact with him, to such an extent that the proudest and most independent of his colleagues were obliged to yield to its spell," wrote the able editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, adding that "one secret of his power lay in his habitual reserve and his remarkable gift of self-control. No man knew better when to speak and when to be silent. Silence was one of the adjuncts and aids of that mysteriousness which served his purpose so well. His followers looked wistfully towards the dumb oracle, and, just because it was dumb, only felt the more deeply persuaded of the unbounded resources of wisdom and sagacity which lay behind. At last, when the shifting tides of opinion seemed to have brought about the propitious moment, the lips of the prophet opened in epigrammatic sentences, and the expectant crowd shook with delight. This was not all trickery. There was sagacity in it as well. He waited till circumstances seemed likely to give force to his words, and he was not often mistaken."

A banquet was given to Her Majesty's Ministers by the Court of Assistants of the Fishmongers' Company on the 27th

of April, and Mr. Bright, in responding to the toast of "The House of Commons," referred to the Bill by saying—

"With regard to this Irish measure to which Lord Hartington referred, I had an interesting letter from Ireland some weeks ago, in which the writer concluded by saying, 'If you will secure the tenant, you will secure the landlord.' (Hear, hear.) And the object of the Bill really is for the purpose of giving as much security, and certainly not more, to the tenant as to the landlord, and to give him the greatest possible stimulus for the exertion of his industry. And if that be the effect of the measure, there can be no manner of doubt that it must be of the greatest advantage to the landlord. (Hear, hear.) I believe the effect of this Bill when it comes into operation will be to steady the price of land in Ireland. The price now is scarcely anything. Land cannot be sold generally over the country. But suppose the landlord be shorn of anything, of what are called rights—great power over individual tenants—his rent, if in some degree moderate, will be secured. He will be able to live among a population who no longer distrust him and hate his agent, and among whom he may dwell in comfort and security such as in many parts of Ireland for a long time he has not been able to enjoy. The Bill of the Government, as you may be sure, is in all the circumstances the best Bill that could be offered to Parliament. It is impossible for any Government to work more steadily than that of Mr. Gladstone. There never was the head of a Government more capable, more anxious to do good than Mr. Gladstone. (Cheers.) Well, that being so, those members of the House of Commons who are supporters of Mr. Gladstone should have patience in some cases; they should have trust in other cases that the Government will do all that they possibly can in the circumstances in which they are placed; and if they give that confidence to the Government, I have no doubt that the Government will as far as possible justify the confidence reposed in them."

Mr. Callan, on the 6th of May, moved—"That, in the opinion of this House, it is expedient and necessary that measures should be taken in the present Session of Parliament to improve the condition of agricultural labourers' habitations in Ireland." Mr. Bright, in speaking on the subject, said:—

"I do not see why, if there was that spirit amongst the Irish classes—I am not speaking of the poor labourer, but of the middle classes—why in the name of common sense is it that during the last hundred years there has not been a single manufactory of any importance established and sustained in Ireland? (Cheers.) Why is it that water runs from Loch Corrib into Galway Harbour, and there is nothing done with it? If it were in America, it would be used. If it were in Great Britain, it would be used. Why is it not used in Ireland? It is not a sufficient answer to say that the land laws are bad. (Hear, hear.) Our land laws are bad. But what we have done has been in the teeth of a system of land laws which is in some respects even worse than that of Ireland. I think Irish members and Irish gentlemen everywhere ought to ask themselves whether it is not possible, amongst the middle classes in that country, to do something to utilise the vast stores of water they have, and the many advantages they have. There is no single disadvantage, except that they have not a supply of coals as good as we have. (An Irish member: 'Nor capital.') As to capital, do you suppose that the people of Great Britain would send their capital to every quarter of the globe, and lose scores if not hundreds of millions of it within the last few years—do you suppose they would not invest their capital if there was a disposition on the part of the Irish people to make use of the capital—(cheers)—and to convince the people of England that their capital was secure?"

Mr. Bright, in discussing the Irish Land Bill, on its second reading, concluded his speech by saying—

"The hon. member for Cork (Mr. Parnell) found some fault in his speeches outside the House with regard to the Bill. He objected to what was said about emigration, and that nothing was said about the labourers. The Bill indicates nothing of the kind that any single Irish man or woman will be compelled or

lured to leave the country and cross the Atlantic. No less than ninety-five thousand persons emigrated from Ireland last year—(cheers)—and if the reports we see in the papers are correct, it seems that now emigration is going on at a greater rate than it was at this time last year. I put it to the hon. member for Cork if the great mercantile steamers were to anchor at Cork or Galway, and to offer free passages to the families of all the population of Connaught, how many would remain behind? Probably he would say the whole of the population of Connaught, but I have not the least doubt the half of them would find their way in a very short time to the United States. That is a country which opens its door to everybody. The Minister of the United States in this country (Mr. Lowell), a man who has put as much wisdom as wit into his poems, in describing that country, says—

‘Whose very latch-string never was drawn in
Against the poorest child of Adam’s kin.’

(Cheers.) Therefore, whilst the Bill does not propose to offer any inducement, except such as the population now have, to any single Irish family to emigrate, yet, I am bound to say I believe it would be far better for a great number of those families to be settled in the better parts of Canada and the United States than to remain where they are, or to be removed from where they are to any of those tracts of land which at a certain expense, not easily ascertained—(hear, hear)—might in Ireland be made fit for habitation. So that I trust that these families that will go, and that are going—notwithstanding the violent passions that are excited in America by statements that are—some of them—not true, and some of them wildly exaggerated—I trust there are persons going to the United States who before long will find, and will hear from the old country that her miseries are abating, and that justice is being done, and that the disloyalty and the suffering that we have had so much to regret are in a great part removed. (Hear, hear.) And with regard to the labourers, to whom the hon. member for Cork has referred, I believe nothing will do so much good for them as anything that will induce farmers to cultivate their land better. (Hear, hear.) What shall I say about this Bill? If the portion of it which deals with the relations of landlord and tenant is worked with fairness, if the other portion—the purchase clauses and powers—is worked with energy, I dare to hope and believe we shall find it a measure of healing and blessing to the Irish people—(loud cheers)—and I ask hon. members on every side of the House not to imagine that the Bill was not framed with a great intention, and honestly, and with a great purpose. (Hear, hear.) Let them support, as far as they can, the Bill, and the Government which has introduced it to the House. This night, and every night, the House prays in language that always strikes me as very touching and very beautiful. As the representatives of the nation we pray to Heaven for the peace and tranquillity of the realm. It is for the peace and tranquillity of the realm that this Bill has been drawn up and proposed to the House; and it is with the hope that if it passes it will tend to that end, that we, with great confidence and not with fear, ask for it the acceptance and the sanction of Parliament.” (Loud cheers.)

On the 19th of May, the second reading of the Bill was carried by 352 to 176.

Mr. Bright was one of the guests at the Ministerial banquet at the Mansion House on the 6th of August, and in his speech on that occasion he again referred to the Irish Land Bill.

“I believe that this measure is as great and as noble a measure on that question as it would be possible for the English Parliament to pass; that it is one which it is impossible, when it becomes law, that the Irish people should not discover to be a great measure of satisfaction and redemption for them, unless they are unable to understand a policy intended directly for their benefit. (Cheers.) I have said that there are fears. I have fears. After the state of things through which the Irish people have gone in so many successive periods, it is not perhaps quite certain that all remedial measures are not too late. I will not express a strong fear that such is

the case; on the contrary, I will express a strong hope that such is not the case. It may be that some would say,

‘For never can true reconciliation grow
Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep;’

but as generation after generation passes, governed by a monarchy kindly, liberal, beneficent like ours, legislated for by a Parliament anxious to do justice to all the people under its sway, I will not doubt, I will believe, that whatever may be the passion, whatever the frenzy in the minds of the Irish people, whatever the gloom that now rests on that country, all this may pass away, and that the time may come, and come soon, when in Ireland it shall be felt as much as it is felt in England, that, with all its faults, our Government does intend to do rightly by the Irish people. (Cheers.) Therefore, looking on the Session now drawing to a close, terrible as has been the work, long as have been the hours and the nights of its toil, often as we have been shocked by conduct in the House that has been distasteful and distracting to us, nevertheless I live in the hope that men will look back to the Session of 1881, and will say that if we had the greatest of statesmen to guide our affairs, in that year was passed the greatest of measures in order to bring about tranquillity, peace, and union in the greatest empire on which the sun shines.” (Loud cheers.)

The Bill was considerably altered in the House of Lords before it returned to the House of Commons. The lower chamber disagreed with those amendments that were considered vitally to affect the Bill, and it was again sent up to the Lords, who passed it, and on the 23rd of August it became law.

In autumn it occurred to Mr. Bright’s townsmen that on the 16th of November of that year he would attain the age of “threescore years and ten,” and they determined to celebrate his birthday by presenting him with an address in their Town Hall, and by a torchlight procession and bonfires, and the programme was carried out with great enthusiasm. As the day drew near, applications from gentlemen from various towns for tickets of admittance were made, but not many were granted, as it was the desire of his townsmen that it should be purely a local demonstration. As much as a guinea was given by strangers for tickets to local possessors of them, and the incessant roll of carriages to the Town Hall in the evening was kept up for hours, as well as a stream of foot passengers.

On the morning of the memorable day, a deputation from the Birmingham Liberal Association presented him at his residence with a congratulatory address, and in the afternoon his work-people, and the Manchester and Salford Liberal Associations, and other public bodies also presented addresses. The streets were gaily decorated, and Mr. Bright, as he proceeded in his carriage through the crowded streets to the meeting at the Town Hall in the evening, was greeted with an enthusiastic welcome along the whole line of route. The Mayor, Mr. Alderman W. Baron, presided. The hall was densely packed,

and the reception the hero of the evening received greatly affected him.

The Mayor presented to Mr. Bright the address from his fellow-townsmen, in which was stated :—

“We pray that for many years to come you may be able to employ with unabated force the powers you have already dedicated to the great ends of human happiness and progress.

“We are proud to dwell on your public career, exceptionally distinguished as it is, and has been, by singleness of purpose, purity of motive, fidelity to principle, and indomitable energy in pursuing the course of a true patriot.

“We vividly recall some periods of a stormy past, during which you stood unmoved, sustained by a sense of rectitude, thereby kindling in us an ever-fresh enthusiasm and admiration.

“The gifts of intellect and the rare powers of utterance with which it has pleased the Almighty to endow you are recognised by all your countrymen. It has been our privilege to see, from your earliest years, how entirely they have been consecrated to the good of your fellow-creatures.

“Permit us to say how much we respect and esteem you for those private virtues which have won for you the love of your workpeople and your fellow-townsmen.

“To have been an apostle of free trade, the advocate of a free press, the promoter of an extended franchise, the uncompromising friend of peace, besides having rendered many eminent services in the cause of civil and religious liberty, were fit passports to office in two Administrations, and we can hardly exaggerate our satisfaction and delight that you, our townsman, should occupy so conspicuous a position in Her Majesty's Government.

“We cannot, within the limits of an address, give full expression to all the sentiments we feel on this occasion. We will, therefore, simply beg you to accept what we now record as an honest indication of our feelings, and of our conviction that, with you emphatically, ‘a hoary head is a crown of glory.’”

Mr. Bright, in a speech that occupied nearly five columns in the daily papers, referred to the several topics mentioned in the Address, and thus concluded :—

“Now, what may I say to you as representing this great constituency? That you will look back upon what you have done as I look back upon it; that you will look back upon it as a pledge that you will not run away from the principles you have so long held, that if you have, as perhaps you have, children growing up, you will inculcate in their minds the sound principles which you believe you hold, so that not the present only but the future of the constituency may be at least up to the measure of the past. If that be done here and elsewhere we may hope that in England not progress meaning merely change, but progress that is a change for good may go on, and that generation after generation may see our country, I don't mean greater in area over the earth's surface, but greater before all the kingdoms of the world in view of the intelligence and the comfort of its people, and the tranquillity of its Government and of its circumstances altogether. (Cheers.) We shall find, of course, that great changes will take place. Circumstances will change, parties will change, leaders will change, names will change, new questions will arise, but one thing, at any rate, you may resolve upon, and that I ask you, as my last words, to care for that wherever you march, to whatever good end, under whatsoever banner you are enlisted, at least let us have for ever on that banner inscribed these words of promise, ‘Justice, and Freedom, and Peace.’” (Cheers.)

The scene was a bright interval snatched from the turmoil of public life, and memorable for the generous and high-minded sentiments it suggested and elicited.

Mr. Bright was escorted home by six brass bands of music and a torchlight procession of about 1,400 persons. The Common in front of his residence was illuminated by an immense bonfire and a display of fireworks. And thus his townsmen commemorated his praise who won that day "The glory of his seventy years."

While Mr. Bright was staying at his favourite sea-side resort, Llandudno, on the 18th. of December, 1881, he laid the foundation-stone of the first Board Schools there, and in the evening of the same day delivered a speech in St. George's Hall, where he was presented with an address by the inhabitants.

"The address refers to the age of your town, to the fact that a little more than a quarter of a century ago it was but a mining village," said Mr. Bright. "I think it is a quarter of a century ago since I first came to this town, and I am not sure whether, entirely without exception, I have not paid it a visit every year since then. (Cheers.) I have rambled over the rocks and hills which are in your neighbourhood, and have enjoyed the almost unsurpassed beauty of the scenes which are offered to the eye. I have spent many, far more than I can count or remember, happy days upon the shores of your bay. I have had some days, too, of acute grief, and I have had some months of severe suffering during a prolonged illness, and for sixteen years past I have paid an annual visit to your mountain graveyard, where rest the remains of a precious child whom death snatched from our family circle. . . . It is a melancholy fact that with regard to our country—I use the term England, but I mean England and Wales—I say it is a melancholy fact that in the past the duty of providing education for the majority of the young people has been almost entirely neglected. We have had universities, it is true, and two universities with enormous wealth, but wealth which, I believe, has been very lavishly and wastefully employed. We have had these universities, but they have given their advantages, such as they are, mainly to the rich. We have had grammar schools and endowed schools in many parts of the country, but they have been in the hands of persons who, to a very large extent, have not kept these schools up to the full intention of their founders, or what the public of our age requires, and in point of fact we may say that generally the whole mass of the people was neglected by the Government, at least, was neglected so far as what we call common school education is concerned. I believe there have been thousands of parishes in England in which there has been no public school whatsoever, and now at last we are beginning to find ourselves awake to the neglect which has hitherto prevailed, and to the necessity for greater and strenuous exertions for the future. In passing through the country, through our great towns, and through many parts of the country outside the towns, we see certainly large public buildings, but they have not been schools. We have seen large poorhouses and large prisons, and schools have been very rare indeed, and those supplied by any recent legislation—I mean recent as compared with the universities and the old grammar schools—have been extremely few, or have not to be seen at all. I think those institutions, that is, the poorhouses and the prisons, are to a large extent memorials and proofs of the unwisdom of past Governments—(hear, hear)—and to some extent of the charity of the public. The pauperism which has required the building of poorhouses all over the country cannot, in my opinion, be attributed fairly to any cause except to the laws and policy of the Governments that have been bad. . . . I know I shall be criticised as being a very backward scholar myself. I am one of those who, in the sense of the high-culture people, never had any education. (Laughter.) I learned some Latin and a very little Greek. All the Greek has long since gone—(a laugh)—and traces of the Latin only remain. . . . Some years ago I met a German gentleman in Birmingham, himself, I believe, from the kingdom of Saxony, and the question of education was being discussed. He told me that fifty years previous, that would now be perhaps sixty years ago, intemperance was so common in that country that if there was a man anywhere very drunk, they said, 'Why, he is as drunk as a Saxon'—(a laugh)—but the gentleman added, 'Now you might use the very opposite expression; and if you wanted to describe a man who was to be relied upon for his

sobriety you would say, 'Why, he is as sober as a Saxon.' I said, tell me how this has been brought about? Have you had any great changes in your laws with reference to the sale of intoxicating liquors? He replied that so far as he knew there was no such legal change of any importance, none that struck his mind; but he added that he believed the change had been made entirely by the schools. (Hear, hear, and applause.) He said that they had had an admirable system of education established, and the result had been such a change in the character of the growing generation. (Applause.) So much self-respect, so much knowledge of what was due to themselves and those around them, so much sense of what would contribute to their own comfort and happiness, that the practice and the vice of intoxication have been almost banished from amongst them. . . . If you could give to all the people, the children who will go to these common schools, the education which I have described—there will be some of them, in all a large number, who will aspire for something more, and will feel that they have the capacity to obtain, and, of course, to all those to whom nature has given the capacity and the desire for further instruction, the way should be open, so that further instruction could be given. I have I know a great many things from my reading. I have derived from the reading of poetry intense gratification, but I do not know that it does so much good to other people; but the more, I take it, that a man can gather of the wisdom of past times, which is to be found in all our libraries, the more at least he ought to be armed for the performance of the duties of life, and of the duties which he owes to the community in which he lives. . . . Every man, whatever his position, who has any interest in the country, and any children, to follow him, has a direct personal interest in the education of the people, so that our Government henceforth may be a Government of wisdom, and not a Government committing follies which I described in the earlier portions of my speech—(cheers)—and now, if you and your children, or the children who go to your school; if the masters teach them self-respect, respect of their playmates, respect of their parents, kindness to animals, a love of truth, a love of industry, an idea of what is meant by prudence—all those common virtues, and I am afraid with some are so uncommon—(laughter)—if they are taught all those, how great may be the results in any town, or in your Principality, or in any community. (Hear, hear.) I believe that, looking to our home affairs, we may expect that with regard to our legislation we may have greater justice done between classes, and that the terms class and class may in time be almost obliterated by the fact of our becoming a united people and nation; and with regard to our foreign affairs, may we not hope that, looking back to the past, the page of glory, false glory, based on misery and blood, shall be closed, and that there shall be a new chapter written, and that the historian of the future shall record in it the policy of our children and our children's children, of a time of a higher civilisation and a time of a higher and purer national morality." (Loud cheering.)

Mr. Bright delivered his annual address to his constituents in the Birmingham Town Hall on the 3rd of January, 1882, and this year, as in previous years, it was one of the important events before the opening of Parliament. Mr. Alderman Avery, the Mayor, presided.

"The question is whether you are to allow terror to be master in a considerable portion of Ireland, or whether you should attempt some remedy," observed Mr. Bright, in his lengthy speech. "Now, of the remedies, the resources of barbarism are soldiers and the gallows. The resources of civilisation—(cheers)—are temporary restraints, and true and honest and broad measures of relief. (Cheers.) Now, I would ask you, in all seriousness, what is this conflict which is going on in some parts of Ireland, not all over Ireland? It is not, by any means, in the majority of the counties of Ireland, but still it is so wide, and so much as to be a matter worthy of very serious reflection. I said last year on this platform that we were on the eve, or in the midst, of something like social revolt in Ireland. There were the elements of discontent. There has always been, so far as I have known anything of Ireland, and there has generally been, some bad men willing to make use of and to stir up those elements of discontent. (Hear, hear.) At present there is a conspiracy discovered, much of it seen altogether undeniable, a conspiracy which is, in reality, a treason to

the Crown, and whose object is the breaking up of the United Kingdom. (Hear, hear.) It is not a love of the tenantry of Ireland, but it is a hatred of England. If you doubt this I will ask you one or two questions. Who is it that finds the money? Who is it that urges on men and crowds of men to this extreme course? Who is it that sends emissaries backwards and forwards across the Atlantic? Who is it that organises committees, even in our English towns, amongst the Irishmen who have come here, and whom we try to treat fairly—(hear, hear)—whom we employ readily, whom we pay honourably, and whom we are willing to accept into our municipal and our town relationship? Who is it that organises amongst these men conspiracy committees, illegal oaths, the collection of arms, and the idea—the miserable idea—that there can ever come the time when they can influence the policy or safety of this country by anything that their miserable conspiracies can do? (Loud cheers.) It is a section of Irishmen in the United States who find the funds for all this machinery; and if you would like to know a little of what they are doing there, I will give you two or three expressions from what has been said at an Irish convention in the city of Chicago. . . . Then there were a good many subscriptions, which must have been a very lively part of the undertaking, and I will read you what three of the subscribers said. It is only two or three lines. Dr. Stowe, Massachusetts, gave 100 dols. a year 'until Ireland is independent—(loud laughter)—and to arm, equip, and put in the field one soldier when the proper time comes.' (Renewed laughter.) Mr. Judge Rooney, of New York, gave 100 dols. for the Land League, and 900 dols. for arms to fight the English. After that a Mr. M'Mahon handed in five dollars, and said he would equip a man for the war and pay his expenses to England and back again. (Loud laughter.) I thought probably that Mr. M'Mahon might save half the money. I doubted whether one equipped soldier if he came here on that errand would ever get back again. (Laughter and cheers.) Now, before I sit down I must give you another fact or two. Amongst these several hundred men in Chicago I have not the least doubt that there were a considerable number who were honest in their belief and patriotic in their objects and intentions to the best of their knowledge, but I have no doubt that they judge of Ireland partly from the history of the last century, and perhaps from stories they had heard from their grandfathers, who were emigrants from this country and from Ireland in much worse times than we have seen of late. . . . We Englishmen are willing to confess the great errors of our forefathers, and we are willing most liberally and emphatically to condemn them. If we insist on a union of feelings and of rights, we allow the Irish to partake of everything that we enjoy, and we are willing to bear our share of every burden that may be placed upon them. They won't deny that, surely. The best market in the world, with the highest price the world will offer for everything they have to sell, we give them. Here, also, is the best market in the world for everything that they may wish to buy, and we receive, not with hatred and with something of unfriendliness, the hundreds of thousands—I am not sure that there is a million and a half—of Irish-born people in Great Britain. Then they have another advantage, and it is the last I shall refer to, which is this, that they are, geographically, close to and allied politically with a country which has a greater abundance of capital than any other country in the world; and the capital of England ranges the whole globe in search of safe and profitable investments, which it very often doesn't find. But surely we may ask why is it that in Ireland, where there is a great field for it, this capital does not find constant and profitable employment? It is because in that country there is disorder and insecurity—(hear, hear)—and every Irishman who in pursuit of political objects stirs up disorder and insecurity is not the friend but the enemy of his country. (Cheers.) I have said nearly all, quite all, I think, that is upon my mind to say. I need not tell this audience that I have for many years expressed and condemned what I considered the grievances which the Irish people have a right to complain of. (Cheers.) I have spoken on platforms in Dublin, in Belfast, and in Limerick, in the Free-trade Hall in Manchester, in this Town Hall of yours, and on the floor of the House of Commons many, many times in explanation of what I believed was the main causes of the constant discontent, and occasionally what I should call insurrectionary movements, and I have besought the people of this country to understand them, and besought Parliament to grapple with them. (Loud cheers.) Well, I have seen great measures of relief passed by the Imperial Parliament, and I have had some little share in making them our permanent laws. (Loud cheers.) And now, notwithstanding troubles, difficulties, and contentions which may not be immediately subdued, I may say, and I say it with perfect sincerity, that I rest now in the belief that these great measures will not fail—(cheers)—and that Ireland will yet become content, and

tranquil, and loyal, as are the other portions of the dominions of the Queen." (Cheers.)

Mr. Chamberlain also addressed the vast meeting.

The House of Commons on the 30th of March was crowded by members and strangers in the galleries who were anxious to hear Mr. Bright speak on the rules of procedure.

"Don't let the House imagine that this is a matter which affects chiefly gentlemen sitting on this side of the House," said Mr. Bright. "It is one which affected the late Government. The right hon. gentleman the member for Devonshire knows perfectly well what difficulties he had to contend with, and that these difficulties have been growing from year to year. I can speak with impartiality upon this question. Though I have been in this House nearly as long, I suppose, as any member of it, still no one can charge me at any time with unduly prolonging a debate or with offering any kind of obstruction to the Government when any measure has been proposed by the Government, or, I think, any measure proposed by any private member. Therefore, no one can bring any charge against me. No one can suppose that it matters very much to me what happens to this Government with regard to the prosecution of this rule. I speak as a person who has all the reasons for being as impartial as any member of the House can be. I say there can be no doubt whatever that the time has come when, unless the House does something to deliver itself of its difficulties, it will stand before the country as having greatly neglected its duty. (Cheers.) . . . Now, the question is whether what is offered is effective or not. I refer to the resolution which is brought forward by the Prime Minister with regard to what is called the closure, or shutting up of the debate. If I were not on this bench I should say openly what I now say rather privately—(a laugh)—and I think the measure as it is proposed, if it has any failing whatsoever, has this, that it is not sufficiently comprehensive and stringent. (Cheers.) I think I shall be able to convince some members of the House of this before I sit down. The resolution itself is to my mind very simple and very moderate. It intends that if a debate be unduly prolonged, and we must have an honest interpretation given to the phrase unduly prolonged, and obstructed, that then there should be a mode by which the House should bring to some definite conclusion the business upon which it is engaged. What is the proposition the Government have made? It is a very simple one, viz., that when a number of under forty members continue to speak without any moderation or limit of time, and there is a general weariness in the House, and a sense that the debate may reasonably come to a close, that then it may be closed if there be more than a hundred members who wish it should be closed. The other proposition is just as simple. It is that if there should be more than forty members, that is more than a quorum of the House, then not one hundred should be allowed to close the debate, but that two hundred should be required to enable that to be done. Now this is no puzzle at all. I should like to ask the House to observe this—what I call a very important point—that with regard to the small minorities the proposition made by the Government is greatly less severe than the proposition of those who consider a majority of two-thirds advisable. . . . Sir, I think that if there be within the walls of this House a party, however small, avowing objects such as these, and pursuing a course such as this, it behoves all members of the House of a different kind to consider the position in which they are. I appeal to hon. gentlemen on that side. I differ from them, as they know, very much, and in many things; but I admit that they are in intention patriotic—(hear, hear)—and that they would wish the honour of Parliament to be sustained and the interests of the country to be guarded. I may, therefore, fairly appeal to them, and I may appeal to hon. gentlemen on this side of the House—(Ministerial cheers)—English members, Welsh members, Scotch members, loyal Irish members—I may appeal to them and ask them whether this House of Commons, with its centuries of renown and its centuries of services, is to be made prostrate, powerless, and useless at the bidding and at the action of the handful of men who tell you that they despise you, and by their conduct would degrade you? (Loud cheers.) Do not let them suppose that they are better friends of Ireland than I am. (Cheers.) I taught what were the wrongs of Ireland, and urged that they should be redressed, when some of these gentlemen were in their long-clothes. (Laughter and cheers.) I am not less a friend of Ireland because I condemn those who, in my opinion, have been of late her worst

enemies. Leaving Ireland out of view, and confining our attention only to this House, may I say that we are six hundred men, elected men, chosen from all parts of the three kingdoms—for what? For the high and noble purpose of legislating for a great and powerful empire. I ask you whether you are willing now to assist Her Majesty's Government, or any Government that may have so great an object in view, for the purpose of so altering to some small extent the rules and practices of this House that, in spite of the mischief of a few, the House shall find itself henceforth able to fulfil the great duties which the people of this great nation have committed to our charge." (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

The close of the speech was delivered with animation, and produced a marked impression. After Sir Stafford Northcote and Mr. Gladstone spoke, the House divided, and the motion was carried by a majority of thirty-nine. On the 1st of May Mr. Bright again spoke on the same subject.

Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain on the 1st of June took part in commemorating the opening of a new library in Birmingham, which had been erected in place of the building destroyed by fire in 1879. The meeting was held in the Town Hall in the afternoon, and the Mayor, Mr. Alderman Thomas Avery, presided.

"I learned one evening in London," said Mr. Bright in the course of his speech—"it was at an evening party, at which many persons were assembled—from a friend of mine that a friend of his and mine was lying dangerously, and, as it turned out, fatally, ill in his chambers in the Temple. That friend of mine was the late Sir David Dundas, who was for many years in Parliament, and with whose friendship for many years I was favoured. I went down the next morning to ask after him, and if it were proper to see him. He invited me, through his servant, into his room, and I found him upon his bed of sickness, feeble, not able to talk much, and scarcely able to turn himself in his bed. We had some little conversation, and in the course of it he offered to me something like a benediction. He said—I remember his words very well—'I have never pretended to be a learned man or a scholar, but God has given me a great love of books.' He then referred to the writings of the celebrated Lord Bacon, and taking a quotation from a letter which that eminent person had written to a friend, he turned to me and said, 'May God lead you by the hand.' That was one of the passages fixed in his mind from his reading of the words of Lord Bacon. That was a solemn hour with my friend—if I may quote a very expressive and beautiful line from one of Scotland's real, but one of her minor poets, Michael Bruce, 'When dim in his breast life's dying taper burned'—at that solemn hour reviewing his past life, reviewing the enjoyment he had partaken of, he thanked God he had given him a great love of books. Two days after that—I think the second or third day after that interview—that 'dying taper' was extinguished, and my friend passed into the unseen world. It occurred to me, and has often occurred to me, what a text the language of my friend was; and if I were a preacher, or if I were in the mood for preaching, I think I could give a sermon from that text. What is a great love of books? It is something like a personal introduction to the great and good men of all past times. Books, it is true, are silent as you see them on their shelves; but, silent as they are, when I enter a library I feel as if almost the dead were present, and I know if I put questions to these books they will answer me with all the faithfulness and fulness which has been left in them by the great men who have left the books with us. Have none of us, or may I not say are there any of us who have not, felt some of this feeling when in a great library—I don't mean in a library quite so big as that in the British Museum or the Bodleian Library at Oxford, where books are so many that they seem rather to overwhelm one—but libraries that are not absolutely unapproachable in their magnitude? The other day, on a recent occasion when a great many persons were assembled at Windsor at a recent marriage, I had an opportunity of spending a quiet hour in the library at Windsor Castle. I have been in other great libraries; I recollect many years ago at Woburn Abbey; on an occasion not so long ago at Chatsworth, and there are hundreds of libraries throughout this

country which are of the kind that I describe—such that when you are within their walls and see these shelves, these thousands of volumes, and consider for a moment who they are that wrote them, who has gathered them together, for whom they are intended, how much wisdom they contain, what they tell the future ages, it is impossible not to feel something of solemnity and tranquillity when you are spending time in rooms like these; and if you come to houses of less note you find libraries that are of great estimation, and which in a less degree are able to afford mental aliment to those who are connected with them; and I am bound to say—and if anyone cares very much for anything else they will not blame me—I say to them, you may have in a house costly pictures and costly ornaments, and a great variety of decoration, yet, so far as my judgment goes, I would prefer to have one comfortable room well stocked with books to all you can give me in the way of decoration which the highest art can supply. The only subject of lamentation is—one feels that always, I think, in the presence of a library—that life is too short, and I am afraid I must say also that our industry is so far deficient that we seem to have no hope of a full enjoyment of the ample repast that is spread before us. (Hear, hear.) But it is not only in the houses of royalty and in the houses of tremendous personages—(laughter)—that these libraries are great things to possess and great things to use, and it is not even in the houses of what we may call the middle-class wealthy, but in the houses of the humble a little library in my opinion is a most precious possession. Only the other day I went by accident into the house of a respectable old man in my neighbourhood (John Ayrton, the gate-keeper of Mr. Bright's mills). He told me that he was then eighty-four years of age. He had a few simple and pleasant pictures on his walls, and on one side, between the fire and the window, was a shelf with a number of books. I dare say I should have found his Bible and probably a Hymn Book, and a score or more of other volumes which to him and his family were precious. That little library, though not exceeding twenty or thirty volumes, was a proof of something higher in that house than unfortunately you will find in many houses in this country. (Applause.) And not long afterwards I called upon an old man, much older (Benjamin Oldham, Mr. Bright's retired gardener, late of Cronkeyshaw): since I saw him he has passed to the other world; but he was then, I think, in his ninetieth year, or close upon it. There he was with his spectacles and a volume which he was reading, and his newspaper, a weekly paper, which he read constantly, and during the ten or fifteen years of his old age, in which he had been unable to follow his usual and ordinary occupation, he found a newspaper or a book one of the means by which the dulness and the weariness of age and solitude were very much mitigated and relieved. Now, I have spoken of the biggest libraries, and of some not so large, and of the twenty volumes in the home of this old man; I will speak of an incident where one volume alone seems to me to have a great effect. Some years ago—I dare say it is twenty years ago—on the invitation of two friends of mine, I was spending a fortnight in Sutherlandshire, on the Elmsdale river, engaged in the healthful occupation of endeavouring to get some salmon out of it. (Laughter.) Precarious occupation! (Laughter.) There is generally, almost always, either too much water or too little—(laughter)—or, as my gillie used to say, 'The salmon are not in the humour, Sir'—(laughter)—and if they knew what we had come about it was not likely that they should be in the humour. (Laughter.) But in the course of the day, walking down the river, we entered the cottage of a shepherd. There was no one at home, I think, except the shepherd's wife or mother, I forget which, but she was an elderly woman, matronly, very kind and very courteous to us. Whilst we were in the house I saw upon the window sill a small and very thin volume, and I took the liberty of going up to it, and, taking it in my hand, I found, to my surprise and delight, that it was an edition which I had never met with before or since—an edition of 'Paradise Regained'—the work of a poet unsurpassed in any country or in any age, and a poem which I believe great authorities admit, if 'Paradise Lost' did not exist, would be the finest in our language. (Applause.) I said I was surprised and delighted down in this remote country, in this solitary house, in this humble abode of this shepherd, to find this volume which seemed to me to transfigure the cottage. (Hear, hear, and applause.) I felt as if that humble dwelling was illumined, as it was, indeed, by the genius of Milton, and, I may say, I took the liberty of asking how the volume came there and who it was that read it. I learned that the good woman of the house had a son who had been brought up for the ministry, and I think at the time I was there he was then

engaged in his labours as a Presbyterian minister in the colony of Canada. Now whenever I think of some of the rivers of Scotland, when I think of the river Elmsdale, if I turn, as my mind does, to that cottage, I always see, and shall never forget, that small, thin volume which I found on the window sill, and the finding of which seemed to me to lift the dwellers in that cottage to a somewhat higher sphere. Now I am afraid you will think I am merely telling you stories about myself—(applause)—but in one of those moments since I received the Mayor's letter I took the liberty of asking a friend of mine who is not far from me on the platform what he thought was the kind of subject which should be spoken of here, and how it should be treated—(laughter)—and his answer was this. He said, 'I suppose and believe that you have read a good many books; why shouldn't you tell us something about them?' Therefore, that turned my thoughts a little in that direction. I am not a critic. I never was a writer. Some people say that critics are writers who have failed to write—(laughter)—and being not very kindly disposed towards those who have succeeded, they become rather spiteful in their criticisms. Well, I am not a critic, and still I have an opinion of books that I have read, and I read one not very lately, at least a large portion of it, to which I should like to refer. It is a book containing the memoirs, and poems, and other compositions of—to my mind—the most remarkable old lady that I have ever heard of—of one Janet Hamilton, who lived, I think, in the town of Coatbridge, in Scotland, in Lanarkshire, if I am not mistaken. Now I should like to tell you what can be done by a person to whom God has given a great love of books. Janet Hamilton was the daughter of a shoemaker who employed one journeyman, and as might be reasonably supposed she became afterwards the wife of the journeyman—(laughter)—and at a very early age too, earlier than I should recommend in similar cases. However, during her life she had a family of ten children, most of whom, I believe, grew up to manhood and womanhood. But she never went to school, and her mother, who was a shoemaker's wife, taught her to read. She did not learn to write until she was fifty, and she became blind at sixty; and she lived, I think, to be about seventy-five or seventy-six. So far for the points of her life. Now, she never saw a mountain, she never saw any river but the river Clyde, and she never was twenty miles away from her own humble dwelling. She read in her childhood, when about five or six or seven years of age, Bible stories, little stories that her mother procured for her, and at eight years of age she found, by accident, on the beam of a weaver's loom, in her neighbourhood, two volumes. One was 'Paradise Lost,' and the other was Allan Ramsay's poems. Now, she read with an extraordinary eagerness, and did not forget what she read—as some of us are much too apt to do. She read through all the village library—the history, the biography, the travels. When she got to Shakspeare, Shakspeare was like a revelation to her—(applause)—and she had no words with which to express her admiration for his writings; and she said that in those days it was not considered a very good thing for serious people to read Shakspeare. (Laughter.) And there was a hole in the wall in her house near the chair on which she nursed her children, and where she worked at some kind of tambour frame-work, and when people came in she put Shakspeare into this hole in the wall, so that it might not be seen, and her conduct might not be criticised. (Laughter.) Well, she said that in her childhood her mother had led her every morning, after she could read, to read a chapter in her Bible, which was done without intermission until she left her home and had a home of her own. She said that her love of books was her ruling passion, and that notwithstanding that, so far as the care of her children and the work she had to do, so far as she knew, nothing was neglected. But she suffered, ultimately, from sitting up to read till two o'clock in the morning; that, she believed, had had the effect of very much injuring, and at last depriving her of her eyesight. Now, somebody asked her how it was that, never having been to school, she wrote so accurately not only in poems, but she wrote for one of Cassell's publications when she was fifty-four years of age, although she only learned to write at fifty, and it is almost impossible now to read her writing, the letters are so curiously formed. But she was asked how she came to write so grammatically, having never been to school, and she said, 'You might as well ask why the laverock'—that is the lark—'can sing.' She said God had given her, not as Sir David Dundas said, a great love of books, but a natural tact or gift of grammar. (Laughter.) Now, this old lady has written poems, some of which—if there was time I would have quoted one or two of them—but certain there are of them that if placed amongst the poems of Burns, in a volume of his, no one would for a moment doubt they were the productions of that, the greatest of all Scotch poets. That, I think, is an amazing story. I confess it has surprised me beyond anything I have read for a long time, and I doubt if we have

on record the particulars of a more remarkable person than my old friend, Janet Hamilton. I am very sorry I never had the opportunity of seeing her, though friends of mine were intimate with her; but I had the pleasure afterwards of giving a little subscription to a fund that was raised for the purpose of putting up a memorial to her in her town, and nearly opposite, I believe, to the house in which she lived. (Applause.) Now, I hope my friend who recommended me to tell about books will not think I have entirely neglected his recommendation. But I would not wish to ask your attention only to Scotland. I have spoken of Sir David Dundas, who was a Scotchman, and of the book in the cottage of the Elmsdale shepherd, and now of Janet Hamilton. If you will permit me for a few minutes I should like to ask you to cross the Atlantic, and see if there is anything we can learn there. (Applause.) It is not very many years ago since authorities in criticism in England said, 'Can any good book come from the United States?' At this moment there are fifty millions of persons in that Republic, nearly all of whom speak our language, nearly all of whom can read our books, not a few of whom are writing books which we may read with advantage. It is an immense new field for the writers of the English language in this country, and it is an immense new field for us who take the good things which the writers in the English language there and here provide for us. Well, we have had a good many poets of late years; in fact, I may say the only poets that the United States have produced must necessarily have been of late years. But the poets who rise to my mind at the present time are Bryant, who was the oldest, and has passed away; Longfellow, who comes next—(applause)—known much more to Englishmen than Bryant, and who now has passed away; Whittier, who is beginning to be more known in this country than he has been; Wendell Holmes—(applause)—Mr. Russell Lowell, Minister from the United States to our Court, and no less, I think I may say, Minister to our people. (Applause.) Longfellow is, or was, a man of whom I had a little personal knowledge. I spent a morning with him once at the house of the late eminent physician, Sir Henry Holland, and, as I walked away with him through Hanover Square, he was speaking to me of his friend Whittier. Nothing could be more kindly, more generous, more affectionate than his language towards his brother poet. There was no rivalry, no jealousy. He said that he thought Whittier was a poet remarkable in one thing, that he seemed always in his writings to improve. Well, I would like to ask you if you have ever read what I consider the greatest of poems of the United States—that is, Longfellow's 'Song of Hiawatha.' Many people have ridiculed the 'Song of Hiawatha' because of the simplicity of the metre; but if you read only the first few lines of it, which I will venture to read to you, you will, I hope, feel rather as I felt, and be disposed again, if opportunity afford, to read the poem through and through if you have already read it. He begins:—

'Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
Who have faith in God and Nature,
Who believe that in all ages
Every human heart is human,
That in even savage bosoms
There are longings, yearnings, strivings
For the good they comprehend not;
That the feeble hands and helpless
Groping blindly in the darkness,
Touch God's right hand in that darkness,
And are lifted up and strengthened.
Listen to this simple story,
To the song of Hiawatha.'

(Applause.) And then through that poem you have descriptions of Indian life and Indian legends which to me are of inexpressible beauty; and I do not hesitate to say, as far as my reading has led me to judge, that that is a poem that deserves to live, and will live; and at this moment it is the finest poem of any length that has been produced by any writer of the United States. Now I shall say a word about John Greenleaf Whittier, because, though I have not seen him, yet I have had correspondence with him, and I have a great affection for him; and, besides, there is a certain other connection, as he in the United States is a member of the small Church of which I also in this country am a member. I met some time ago during the American war an eminent citizen of the State of Massachusetts, who told me that he thought that there was no man in the United States whose writings at the time and for some years before the war had had so great influence upon public opinion in that country as the writings of John Greenleaf Whittier. And no doubt

that arose partly from this—that he wrote strongly on the subject of freedom, and strongly against the system of slavery which was about to involve that great country in a great civil war. (Applause.) I would not wish to exaggerate anything with regard to the American poets, but I think a great deal may be said in their favour. (Hear, hear.) Whittier himself when he attacks the question of negro slavery and the horror and the curse of it, writes in a manner which must have roused the indignation and excited the animosity of the people for whom he wrote against that enormous evil. I will read you one stanza from one of his little poems, and ask you whether if such an enormity of slavery had existed amongst us this would not have roused our indignation. He wrote a poem called ‘The Farewell of a Virginia Slave-mother to her Daughters,’ who were sold South into a worse bondage than that of Virginia:—

Gone, gone, sold and gone !
To the rice swamp, dark and lone ;
Then no mother's eye is near them,
Then no mother's ear can hear them ;
Never—when the torturing lash
Seams their back with many a gash—
Shall a mother's kindness bless them,
Or a mother's arms caress them.
Gone, gone, sold and gone !
To the rice swamp, dark and lone ;
From Virginia's hills and waters !
Woe is me ! my stolen daughters !

If God gives a real poet to a people like that, at a time like that, and puts into his heart those sentiments, and into his mouth those words, does he not verily speak to that people and ask them to return to the ways of mercy and righteousness? (Applause.) In one of the recent editions of Mr. Whittier's poems he inserts a small preface of five or six stanzas, and the last stanza is one which, I think, explains the tone and general object of his writings. He says:—

‘O freedom ! if to me belong
Nor mighty Milton's gift divine,
Nor Marvell's wit and graceful song,
As theirs, I lay, like them, my best gifts on thy shrine.

And so the best gifts of his genius and poesy are on the side of freedom. They have helped to do their work in the United States: they will do their work wherever the English language is spoken—(hear, hear)—they will tend to purify the individual and to exalt the nation. (Applause.) I was going to say that I would not exaggerate the productions of the American poets. We do not place them on a level with Milton and Shakspeare; but then in this country—perhaps in the world—there is but one Milton and one Shakspeare, and without placing them on that level we may accept them, and I think all readers have now accepted them, as real and genuine poets, contributing through our language to human freedom, to human enjoyment, and to human happiness. I recollect many years ago—about forty years ago—in a speech in Covent Garden Theatre, at one of our Free-trade meetings, I quoted a passage, which I forget now, from the late Leigh Hunt, who was himself a poet, and has left poems that should not die. (Hear, hear.) In making this quotation, I spoke of Leigh Hunt as a ‘pleasure-giving’ poet, and two or three days afterwards I received from him a very kind note, in which he said it was impossible I could have chosen a title which he should more delight to deserve and to have than that of a pleasure-giving poet. Well, I say, after referring to the five or six poets that I have now mentioned, all poets of the United States—and I might have added of them that they are in the true and the high sense ‘pleasure-giving poets,’ and I am sure it would be a great addition to our knowledge of useful and charming literature the more we become acquainted with these poets, who speak to us from the other side of the Atlantic—I will mention one other book, and only one, and that is not a book of poetry at all; it is a book of history, and, to my mind, the most instructive book of history that I have ever read. I do not mean that it contains more facts than some bigger books—facts are abundant—but the study which it gives or offers, the lessons which it teaches, surpass to my mind those that I have derived from or found in any other book of history. I refer to Bancroft's ‘History and Colonisation of the United States.’ It is a book a good deal read in this country. It deserves to be read by everybody who wishes to have some true knowledge of some of the most important events

which transpired during the last century. . . . My own impression is that there is no blessing that can be given to an artisan's family more than a love of books. The home influence of such a possession is one which will guard them from many temptations and from many evils. How common it is—in all classes too common—but how common it is amongst what are termed the working classes—I have seen it many times in my district—where even an industrious and careful parent has found that his son or his daughter has been to him a source of great trouble and pain. No doubt, if it were possible, even in one of these homes, to have one single person who was a lover of books, and knows how to spend an evening usefully with a book, and who could occasionally read something from the book to the rest of the family, perhaps to his aged parents, how great would be the blessing to the family, how great a safeguard would be afforded; and then to the men themselves, when they came—as in the case which I have mentioned—to the feebleness of age, and when they can no longer work, and when the sands of life are as it were ebbing out, what can be more advantageous, what more a blessing, than in these years of feebleness—may be sometimes of suffering—it must be often of solitude—if there be the power to derive instruction and amusement and refreshment from books which your great library will offer to every one? (Applause.) To the young especially this is of great importance, for if there be no seed-time there will certainly be no harvest, and the youth of life is the seed-time of life. I see in this great meeting a number of young men. It is impossible for anybody to confer upon them a greater blessing than to stimulate them to a firm belief that to them now, and to them during all their lives, it may be a priceless gain that they should associate themselves constantly with this library and draw from it any books they like. The more they read the more in all probability they will like and wish to read. Mr. Lewis Morris, in his late charming poem called 'The Ode of Life'—in that part of it dedicated to youth, and in addressing the imaginary youth of whom is writing—says:—

'For thee the fair poetic page is spread,
Of the great living and the greater dead;
To thee the greater gains of science lie,
Stretched open to thine eye.'

What can be better than this—that the fair poetic page, the great instructions of history, the gains of science—all these are laid before us, and of these we may freely partake. I spoke of the library in the beginning of my observations as a fountain of refreshment and instruction and wisdom. Of it it may be said that he who drinks shall still thirst, and thirsting for knowledge and still drinking, we may hope, he will grow to a greater mental and moral standard, more useful as a citizen, and more noble as a man."

Mr. Bright took part in the discussion of the Prevention of Crimes (Ireland) Bill in committee, on the 23rd of June, remarking:—

"We know, further, that in America there has been a series of constant conspiracies for some years past in connection with something like corresponding conspiracies in Ireland. We know, and hon. gentlemen opposite know very well, that not many years ago a soldier of fortune, a man ready to fight anywhere—I hope not for any cause against this country—and who expected that his friends in Ireland would put him at the head of an army of twenty thousand men, published afterwards an account of his experiences in one of the reviews of this country. I had an opportunity of conversing for about an hour with him when he came over here, and he told me the reason, which I think was not perfectly accurate, which had brought him here. He asked me my view as to the state of opinion in this country chiefly with regard to Ireland, and I told him nothing could be more hazardous, nothing could be more certain in leading to destruction, than if he entered into the path of conspiracy which was then disclosed. I recollect in the article that he wrote he said he had found out that the police had discovered the whole matter, and he left London very suddenly. He said, 'On occasions like this I travel with very little luggage.' (Laughter.) General Chideray, as he was called, was a very sensible man, and got out of the difficulty into which he had very nearly plunged himself. These are the things we have in our minds in connection with Irishmen in America and the discontented Irishmen in Ireland."

CHAPTER XLV.

WITHDRAWS FROM THE CABINET.

The War in Egypt—Resignation from the Cabinet—Speech in the House of Commons—Mr. Gladstone's Reply—Visitors from America—Invitation to the United States—Opening a new Infirmary at Rochdale—Installation as Lord Rector at Glasgow—Presentation of an Address from the Glasgow Liberals—Visit to the Monument of Janet Hamilton—Speech on the Union of Church and State.

At the beginning of 1882 the Khedive of Egypt, yielding to pressure, consented to reinstate one of his ministers, named Arabi, in the war department; and this act was considered as a triumph of the national party. As there was a prospect of civil war in Egypt, England and France presented a joint note, declaring the maintenance of the Khedive's authority. Arabi and the army became more popular, and the Khedive was forced to accept a national ministry. The Organic Law was adopted, notwithstanding the protest of the controllers, thus subverting the authority of England and France embodied in the control. Arabi at last became dictator, and was secretly supported by the Sultan. England and France next agreed that any disturbance of the *status quo* must be prevented. A British and French squadron accordingly anchored in the harbour of Alexandria in the latter part of May. On the 25th of the same month, the English and French consuls-general presented an ultimatum to the Egyptian minister demanding the temporary removal of Arabi and two other leaders of the mutinous soldiery, and the resignation of the ministry. The Khedive assented, but the army and the nationalists were dissatisfied. The army urged the restoration of Arabi, and it was announced that if the Khedive refused, the lives and the property of the Europeans would not be safe. The Khedive reinstated Arabi, and many of the Europeans in Cairo removed to Alexandria, where hundreds of them took refuge on board ships. On the 11th of June a Mussulman preconcerted riot took place in Alexandria, and a number of Europeans were killed and their houses pillaged. The Khedive and his ministers strove in vain to allay the excitement. Arabi, who was aiming at the deposition of the Khedive's supremacy, was recognised by the Porte who elevated him to the highest rank of the Medjidie. France was unwilling to interfere. Sir B.

Seymour informed the English Cabinet that the works on the forts in Alexandria were being actively carried on. On the 6th of July the admiral demanded their instant cessation, under penalty of bombardment. The Khedive protested against this act, but the works on the forts still proceeded. Sir B. Seymour, on the 10th of July, insisted on the surrender of the forts at the mouth of the harbour as a material guarantee. The Egyptian ministers strove to negotiate, but the admiral was firm in his resolution, and early on the morning of the 11th eight British ironclads and five gunboats fired on the forts, and in a few hours they were battered down, while the vessels escaped with little damage and slight loss of life. The next day a flag of truce was displayed, and the Egyptian forces evacuated the town, but before doing so set fire to the European quarters, which were plundered. The British blue-jackets and marines landed and restored order. The other powers did not interfere, and England was left to act alone. The Cabinet next despatched an expeditionary force "to secure British interests and restore order." Mr. Bright then resigned his seat in the Cabinet, as he considered that a violation of international law and moral law had been committed. However, the war proceeded, and ended in September in favour of the invaders. The total charge for the English military, naval, and Indian services down to the close of the war amounted to about £4,000,000, which the heavily-taxed Englishman would have to pay.

On July the 17th Mr. Bright entered the House of Commons, and took a seat on the second bench below the gangway. After the questions on the paper were exhausted there were cries of "Bright," and upon rising he was received with cheers, and he said :—

"I was not intending to offer any observations to the House on this, to me, new and peculiar occasion. I suppose hon. gentlemen are wishful to know perhaps more than they do know about the reasons why I am not found in my accustomed seat. To tell the truth, I have no explanation to make. There seems to me nothing to explain, and I have nothing to defend. The simple fact is that I could not agree with my late colleagues in the Government in their policy with regard to the Egyptian question. It has been said—some public writers have said, and some have said in private conversation—why have not I sooner retired from the Government?—(hear, hear)—and why have I postponed my resignation to this time? It has been asked why did not I resign last Tuesday or Wednesday? I may answer that by saying that my profound regard for my right hon. friend at the head of the Government—(hear, hear, and cheers)—and my regard also for those who now sit with him, is so great that I was prompted to remain with them until the very last moment, when I found it no longer possible to retain my office in the Cabinet. The fact is that the disagreement was to a large extent fundamental. If I had remained in office it would have been under these circumstances—either that I must have submitted silently to many measures which I must altogether condemn, or I must have remained in office in a state of constant conflict with my colleagues. Therefore it was better generally—it was better for me—the House, I am sure, will unanimously agree, that I should ask my right hon. friend to permit me to retire, and place my resignation in the hands of

the Queen. The House knows—at all events those who have had an opportunity of observing any of the facts of my political life for forty years know—that at least I have endeavoured from time to time to teach my countrymen an opinion and doctrine which I hold, which is that the moral law is not intended only for individual life, but is intended also for the life and practice of States. (Cheers from below the gangway). I think in the present case there has been a manifest violation of international law—(hear, hear)—and of the moral law, and therefore it is impossible for me to give any support to it. I cannot repudiate what I have preached and taught during the period of a rather long political life. I cannot turn my back upon my belief and deny all that I have taught to many thousands of others during the forty years I have been permitted in public meetings and in this House to address my countrymen. One word only more. I asked my calm judgment and my conscience what was the path of right to take. They pointed it out to me with an unerring finger, and I am humbly endeavouring to follow it.”

A deep silence fell upon the House as the last words were uttered, and in referring to the Prime Minister he spoke with emotion.

Mr. Gladstone next rose and said :—

“In the peculiar circumstances, it is by the indulgence of the House that I rise to say a single word, which my own feelings tell me—and I think the feelings of others will answer to mine—it would be culpable on my part to omit. This is not the occasion for arguing the question of difference that has unhappily arisen between my right hon. friend and those who were proud to be his colleagues. But I may venture to assure him that we concur with him in thinking that the moral law applies to States—(Mr. Biggar: ‘Hear, hear’)—as it does to individuals, and that the difference between us—a difference most painful to him, and most painful to us all—is a difference upon a particular case, and a particular application of the law to that case. It is to us, as it is to him, an occasion of the profoundest pain. But he carries with him the unbroken esteem, and, upon every other question, the unbroken confidence of his colleagues, and their best and warmest wishes for his happiness, and that it may follow him in the independent position to which he has found it necessary to retire.” (Cheers.)

On the 25th of September, Mr. Bright, while staying at Cassenary, Creetown, N.B., on a visit to his friend, James Caird, Esq., now Sir James Caird, K.C.B., forwarded a letter to the Rev. Thomas Rippon, of Warrington, in reply to one written by the reverend gentleman, who held that “Peace at any price” was an untenable position, and that the Egyptian war seemed a righteous one.

“The *Spectator* and other supporters of this war answer me by saying that I oppose the war because I condemn all war. The same thing was said during the Crimean war,” replied Mr. Bright. “I have not opposed any war on the ground that all war is unlawful and immoral. I have never expressed such an opinion. I have discussed these questions of war, Chinese, Crimean, Afghan, Zulu, Egyptian, on grounds common to, and admitted by, all thoughtful men, and have condemned them with arguments which I believe have never been answered.

“I will not discuss the abstract question. I shall be content when we reach the point at which all Christian men will condemn war when it is unnecessary, unjust, and leading to no useful or good result. We are far from that point now, but we make some way towards it.

“But of this war I may say this, that it has no better justification than other wars which have gone before it, and that doubtless when the blood is shed and the cost paid, and the results seen and weighed, we shall be generally of that opinion.

“Perhaps the bondholders, and those who have made money by it, and those who have got promotion and titles and pensions, will defend it, but thoughtful and Christian men will condemn it.”

On the 26th of July Mr. Bright received at his London residence a party of twenty-five American working people, who were travelling through Europe, and who were anxious to see him. They were selected from among the 3,000 employés of Messrs. Jordan and Marsh, the most extensive of manufacturing merchants and drapers, of Boston, New England; and were travelling at the expense of their employers. The excursion was intended as a token of recognition of their faithful services, as well as a pleasant schooling in the customs and institutions of the Old World. They were introduced to Mr. Bright by Mr. B. Armitage, M.P. Mr. Bright spoke to them on several subjects concerning America, and remarked that he himself had more blood relations in America than he had in England. At the close of the interview he went through the ceremony of shaking each by the hand, and all were pleased.

In the early part of 1883, Mr. Bright received from Mr. Evarts a resolution unanimously adopted by the Union League Club of New York, inviting the right hon. gentleman to visit the United States as the guest of the club, which was to celebrate its twentieth anniversary. Mr. Evarts in his letter, after referring to Mr. Bright's support of the Northern cause during the civil war, said :—

"The Union League Club has always counted among the important political aids to the support of the authority of our Government, under the stress through which it passed, the firm, unflinching, and impregnable attitude which you and your and our great friend, Mr. Cobden, opposed to the great current of commercial, social, and political interest and opinion which, both in England and on the Continent, set so strongly against the success of the loyal power of the country in dealing with so powerful a revolt. We have never attempted to measure the extent of our obligations to you, nor to calculate the misfortune to our cause had it missed the support of so great a defender.

"These sentiments of the Union League Club are shared by the great body of the sober and thinking people of this country, and the hospitality which we proffer you will be but one form of the general acclaim which your presence in the United States will call forth. . . . In asking you to be our guest from the time you take the sea to make this desired visit through the whole of your travel in our country, and until you again reach your home, we can promise you that every eye and every heart of all our countrymen will greet you with its blessing, and that, beyond this, our people will encroach as little upon the quiet and freedom which you may think suitable to your health and enjoyment, during your stay with us, as you may desire."

"I never liked the sea," remarked Mr. Bright, in concluding his letter in reply, "and my once strong appetite for travel has subsided, and I cannot but feel that the friendly welcome promised me on your side of the Atlantic would force me into a publicity from which I shrink.

"What can I say, then, in reply to letters so complimentary, and yet, I cannot doubt, so friendly and sincere? That I am deeply grateful to you and to your and my friends on whose behalf you have written, and that I regret with a feeling not less strong that I am not able to accept the kind invitation you have sent me, and the most kind welcome you have offered and promised me. I write with difficulty; but you will understand how hard it is to make a fitting, when an unfavourable, reply to such letters as you and your friends have addressed to me. You will forgive me if I cannot come. I can never forget your great kindness, and the honour you have conferred upon me."

As far back as July, 1879, the Hon. R. B. Hayes, the President of America, invited Mr. Bright to Washington, as at that time he had been misinformed that the distinguished Englishman contemplated visiting America, and assured him that he would find in all parts of the United States a "disposition to make his stay in all respects agreeable to his own wishes in respect to the measures and modes of their hospitality." Mr. Bright wrote in reply to the President :—

"I regret very much that I have not, in years that are gone, visited the United States; my public occupations, and the circumstances or conditions of my home life have interfered with my wishes, and I have not been able to cross the Atlantic; and now, when your letter reaches me, I feel unable to avail myself of your great kindness, and to accept the great honour you offer me. I seem to have reached the age when voyages and travels have not only lost their charm, but are become burdensome even to the thought, and when I dare not undertake to meet the expressions of goodwill which I am assured would await me from my friends in your country. I have suffered much during the past year from the heaviest of all domestic bereavements, and I have lost, for a time at least, the spirit and the energy which are needful to make a visit to America useful or pleasant. You refer to the course I took during the great trial through which your country passed from 1860 to 1865. I was anxious that your continent should be the home of freedom, and that, as respects your country and my own, although we are two nations, we should be only one people. Hence I rejoice now in your union, your freedom, and your growing influence and prosperity. I know not if I may ever visit your great country; I should be sanguine now to expect it. But whether I do or not, I shall ever feel grateful for the kindness shown to me by so many of her people, and for the unexpected honour which your letter has conferred upon me."

Mr. Bright performed the ceremony of opening, in his native town on the 12th of February, 1883, a new Infirmary, which was the generous gift of Mr. Thomas Watson, manufacturer, of Rochdale; and in presiding over a meeting which was held afterwards in one of the large wards, he traced the biography of the donor from humble circumstances in early life to his present wealthy and honourable position.

"It appears to me that there is scarcely any mode by which a population like ours can be benefited and cared for that exceeds in value that of the establishment of an institution of this kind," further remarked Mr. Bright. "What is our population? We are here two or three hundred persons, but in this parish I suppose there must be not far from 100,000 people. I don't know whether fewer or more—(a Voice: 'More')—but, however, quite that. And what is the population doing every day to obtain its three meals? Well, it is working in the cotton factories and the woollen mills, in the foundries, engineering works, and machine making works; it is found, some in coal mines, some in stone quarries, a great number in the building trades—carpenters, stonemasons, brick-setters, slaters, and all the labourers who are employed in the building trades; it is found in the local traffic, wagoners, carriers, conducting the business of the locality; it is found employed in the works upon the railway. Amongst all this, it is easy to see, not only are accidents liable to occur, but we know that they do occur, and with a painful frequency, amongst a population so employed; and we who are in a condition of life—most of us, probably—little liable to these accidents, cannot, I think, but have a great sympathy, as Mr. Watson has, with the painful troubles which come to other persons, and to many of them who are employed in the different branches to which I have referred; and, when an accident happens, their condition is not such as we should like. Their homes are small houses, with two, three, or four not large rooms; sometimes the

house is crowded. A person who is suffering from a severe accident is brought home. It is difficult for him to have a room to himself, and the tranquillity of a quiet chamber. Anything that he has in excess of his ordinary habits is so much taken from the remainder of the family and adds to their discomfort; and if you require medical aid, which is necessary, of course—surgical aid and nursing—it is extremely difficult to employ it and to secure it in the best manner under the circumstances of many of these cottage homes. Well, now, in this house we are in, here is one of the wards; there is another as large as this above; there is a ward intended for little children; and here every person, however poor, however suffering, however friendless, if he is brought in from accident or suffering such as this institution is intended for, will, as far as surgical aid, medical aid, and nurse aid are concerned, be just as well attended to as if he lived in the best house in the parish. (Applause.) This building, whether we regard it outside or inside, appears to me admirably calculated for its purpose. Outside there is a certain mixture of the modern and the almost antique which, I think, gives it a character which is very pleasing. Inside the arrangements are such that if you look round, as you will all of you do before you go away this afternoon, you will see how admirably everything has been done. I observe that Mr. Watson, yielding to advice which he had better have resisted, has given my name to the ward in which we are assembled. (Laughter and applause.) I could have suggested something much better, but I have heard from Mr. Watson that some members of his family—I can only hope that it will be young ladies—(applause)—who are so friendly disposed to me—have insisted upon that name. The ward above is to be known by the name of a beloved daughter of Mr. Watson, whose removal by death some years ago left a sore gap in his family circle. Wherever you look round, I think you will find great taste and good judgment. There is nothing that is mean or stinted in the arrangements of the place or its adaptation to its purpose; everything has been dictated, in my view, by good common sense and largeness of heart, and I do not know any two things better in the world than those two qualities. (Applause.)

Although Mr. Bright was elected Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow in November, 1880, he deferred the ceremony of the installation, and his address to the students, to the 22nd of March, 1883. The liveliest interest was taken in the proceedings, and an audience numbering 5,000 assembled in St. Andrew's Hall. Mr. Bright, in his speech, which occupied an hour and a quarter in delivering, said:—

“Would you believe, that if you were to add up all the expenditure in this country since the beginning of the century, and during the lifetime of some thousands of people now living—expenditure upon war, war debts, expenditure of military and naval war kind—what do you suppose it comes to? You could not guess, and if I told you you would be no wiser. (Laughter.) It comes to the sum of £4,414,000,000 sterling of taxes. I say you would be no wiser. I don't know that we are any wiser from hearing that a man is worth a million, except that he is a rich man. We don't know very well what a million is. But what is twenty millions, and what are one hundred millions, or what are a thousand millions, or four thousand millions. It is like speaking of those great astronomical distances of which at lectures we hear so much and still know so little. (Much laughter and applause.) But if these military expenses have come to £4,414,000,000 how much has the real government, the civil government of the country, cost during the same time? It has cost £1,012,000,000. Less than one-fifth of all our expenditure has been in our civil government; more than four-fifths has been expended in wars past or wars prepared for in the future. This very year, I suppose, what with the estimates, and what with the debt and the repayments, the expenditure in British affairs will be very little short of sixty millions sterling. I want to ask any sensible body of men—(hear, hear)—be they as young as those students—(“Oh,” and laughter)—or be they as old as we always believe professors to be—(laughter and cheers)—I want to ask them whether it should be necessary that the wealth, the labour, the means, the comfort, the happiness of the population of thirty-five millions of people of these islands should be taxed to the amount of this tremendous and inconceivable expenditure which

I have just mentioned to you? ('No,' and cheers.) . . . I ask you then, what of the people and what of the millions? We find poverty and misery. What does it mean when all these families are living in homes of one room to us who have several rooms, and all the comforts of life? It means more than I can describe and more than I will attempt to enter into. And as need begets need, so poverty and misery beget poverty and misery; and so in all our great towns, and not a little in some of our smaller towns, there are misery and helplessness such as I have described. In fact, looking at the past—to me it is a melancholy thing to look at—there is much of it which excites in me not astonishment only but horror. The fact is, there passes before my eyes a vision of millions of families—not individuals, but families—fathers, mothers, children, passing ghastly, sorrow-stricken, in never-ending procession from their cradle to their grave. (Loud cheers.) Now I have to put to you a question. A friend of ours in the corner there was a little stirred because some of the subjects on which I treated seemed to have a political aspect. (Cheers.) Why, some one has said that the two things of all others in the world that are worth considering, worth talking about, are the subjects of religion and politics. Now, I want to ask you whether the future is to be no better than the past? Do we march or do we not to a brighter time? (Cheers.) For myself, as you know, it will not be possible for me to see it, but even whilst the sands of life are running it may be one's duty, if it be possible in the smallest degree, to promote it. For you young gentlemen that are before me, that have done me the distinguished honour to invite me here to address you, I would say that you have before you, many of you, the prospect of writing the transactions of the public policy of your country for forty or fifty, or even, it may be, for more years to come. On you and such as you depends greatly our future. What I want to ask you is whether you will look back upon the past and examine it carefully—look round you in the present and see what exists, and endeavour, if it be possible, to give a better and a higher tone to our national policy for the future. (Cheers.) To me it appears that we have trodden for two centuries past—I keep myself to that because since that time the public opinion of the country has had greatly increased influence—I say for two centuries past we have trodden in the footsteps of the Cæsars, and have accepted the barbarous policy of Pagan Rome; and whilst, at the same time, with a vast and unconscious hypocrisy we have built thousands of temples, and have dedicated them to the Prince of Peace, and I say—I say it with grief and shame—that they who have ministered at His altars have for the most part on these matters been absolutely dumb. Now, Sir, I ask you this question, shall we reverse this policy? Shall we strive to build up the honour—the true honour and the true happiness of our people—on the firm basis of justice, morality, and peace? I plead not for the great and for the rich. I plead for the millions who live in the homes of only one room. (Loud cheers.) Can ye answer me in the words—words which I have quoted years ago on a somewhat like occasion—words which fell from the crowned minstrel who left us the Psalms, 'The needy shall not always be forgotten; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.'" (Loud and prolonged cheering.)

Three of the gentlemen on whom the University conferred the degree of LL.D. on this occasion are residents of Birmingham, Manchester, and Rochdale, namely—the Rev. R. W. Dale, an able preacher; Mr. Henry Dunckley, editor of the *Manchester Examiner and Times*; and the Rev. W. N. Molesworth, author of "The History of England from the Year 1830." It may be interesting here to state that in the autumn of 1852 a prize of £250 was offered by the council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League for a prize essay on the general result of Free-trade. Mr. Bright and Mr. Cobden were appointed the adjudicators. Thirty-one literary gentlemen competed, and the prize was awarded to Mr. Henry Dunckley, M.A., then resid-

ing at Salford, whose essay was pronounced to possess more than ordinary merit. Three years before this date he won a prize of £100 which had been offered by the Religious Tract Society, in a contest with 150 other competitors, for an essay on "The Glory and Shame of Britain." It was a reasonable sequence that a man of his natural literary ability would soon find a sphere of action and an outlet for his talents in connection with the press, and he ultimately became the editor of *The Manchester Examiner and Times*, in which position he has ever since manifested an ability of the highest order. The series of articles which are appearing in the *Manchester Weekly Times*, under the *nom de plume* of "Verax," are written by him, and about two years ago they attracted so much public attention and admiration that the citizens of Manchester and surrounding towns marked their approval by a public presentation to him. Mr. Dunckley is a native of Warwick, and was educated at an academy at Accrington, of which the Rev. David Griffiths was the principal, and from there he removed to Glasgow, where he graduated M.A., and afterwards took up his residence at Salford.

The Senate of the Glasgow University, after Mr. Bright delivered his speech to the students, entertained the Lord Rector and other gentlemen at luncheon. Amongst the guests were—Lord Rosebery, Mr. H. Campbell-Bannerman, M.P., Mr. C. Tennant, M.P., Mr. R. W. Cochran Patrick, M.P., Mr. A. Orr-Ewing, M.P., Lord M'Laren, Sir James Watson, Lord Kinnear, Mr. J. A. Bright, the Hon. E. Marjoribanks, M.P., Mr. Duncan M'Laren, Sir Wm. Thomson, Mr. Henry Dunckley, Mr. R. W. Dale, the Rev. W. N. Molesworth, and Professor Adamson.

At the residence of Mr. C. Tennant, one of the members for the city of Glasgow, in the evening of the memorable day, the Executive of the Glasgow Liberal Association presented Mr. Bright with an illuminated address, in which it was stated that:—

"The Executive of the Glasgow Liberal Association gladly avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by your visit to Glasgow as Lord Rector of its ancient University to present you with this address, in grateful acknowledgement of the eminent services you have rendered to your country in the cause of industrial and political freedom.

"The history of the nation for nearly forty years has been one of almost unbroken progress, your part in the achievement of which has earned for you the lasting gratitude of your countrymen.

"Your Parliamentary career, dating from 1843, forms, indeed, a brilliant example of devotion to the political, moral, and social advancement of the people. Entering upon public life at a time when, by the operation of class privileges and unequal laws, trade was everywhere fettered, and the consequent sufferings of the people

were unusually severe, you devoted your whole energies, in happy association with your distinguished friend Richard Cobden, to procure the abolition of the Corn Laws, and to establish that freedom of trade by which the wealth of the country and the happiness and comfort of the industrial classes have been so greatly increased.

"Throughout your public career it has ever been your aim to reconcile the people to existing institutions by bringing these into harmony with the principles of justice; and this beneficent purpose has already been largely fulfilled by the success of your long and arduous labours in the cause of Parliamentary reform. You have, in brief, always trusted the people; and that your confidence has not been misplaced is shown by the fact that the nation has prospered in proportion as the masses have been entrusted with the power to govern themselves.

"We cannot forget your powerful advocacy of the repeal of the taxes on knowledge; and we thank you for the efforts you have made to promote peace and discourage war.

"Your unwearied exertions to remove the real grievances of the Irish people command the approval of all who dare to be just and fear not; and we confidently believe that the efforts towards this end of yourself and the other leaders of the Liberal party will in due time be crowned with complete success.

"Years ago you declared in the House of Commons that you had laboured only to destroy that which was evil and to build up that which was good, and the verdict of your countrymen has ratified your claim. They recognise in you a statesman who, whether as a Minister of the Crown or as an independent member of Parliament, has, with single-mindedness of purpose, striven unceasingly to promote the well-being of every class of the community, and to strengthen the Constitution of the realm on the foundation of a contented and a prosperous people.

"We devoutly hope that your valuable life may be long spared to our country; that for many years English literature may be still further enriched by you with 'thoughts that breathe and words that burn;' and that the nation may long enjoy the privilege of your persuasive eloquence and ardent efforts in helping to place on the statute-book those important measures which are now ripe for settlement, and which are but the natural development of the principles you have so long and earnestly advocated.

"WILLIAM COLLINS, Knt., President.

"W. LORIMER, Chairman.

"WILLIAM FIFE, Vice-Chairman.

"WARDEN R. MAXWELL, Hon. Treasurer.

"ALEX. MACDOUGALL, Hon. Sec."

Mr. Bright, in his reply, in speaking against the minority clause of Lord Cairns, said:—

"The boroughs which have the privilege or insult of voting in this manner have now experience, and I think their opinion ought to weigh with Parliament when the question comes to be considered again. We are thrown into contests which would be avoided, and much expense is incurred in contests which are forced upon us by this clause. I think this evil should be legislated upon by Parliament, which ought really to do everything it can to prevent expensive contests, and the unpleasantness which arises from any violation whatever of the lines of the Constitution, such as is found in this clause. I thought, perhaps, it might be worth while to make a few observations upon this, because we are coming now to a time when people will begin to think it is not a very long way off before there will be a general election, or before the Government introduce a measure in which this clause will have to be considered, and might be dealt with, and, therefore, it might be useful to bring it before the public in your city, and before the public in all other parts of the country, who might read the transactions of this little meeting. I did not expect myself to take a very active part again in many public questions. Those for which I have contended during the last forty years have, the most of them, either been carried or there is that kind of agreement with regard to them being enacted that it is only a question of time. (Hear, hear.) The terror that men had of the suffrage is now gone. (Hear, hear.) The Conservative party have got over the fright, and they now won't pledge themselves to oppose any extension of the franchise to the counties, and they all say that the redistribution of seats, as a matter of course, must come with that or soon after. Therefore the old bogie or hobgoblin which frightened

them has disappeared, and they are open, at least, to discuss the question in which they naturally have just as much interest as we have, and their opinion ought to have its due weight. But generally, I think, looking at the House of Commons, and looking at the country, and looking at the press, there is a disposition to make the next Reform Bill one of a substantial character, that it should not be necessary or desirable, at least for a good many years, that the question should be disturbed again. (Applause.)

The next day Mr. Bright was presented with the freedom of the city of Glasgow at a large meeting in the City Hall. Lord Provost Ure presided. Amongst the gentlemen on the platform were Lord M'Laren, the Earl of Rosebery, Sir Donald Currie, M.P., Mr. W. Holms, M.P., Mr. A. Crum, M.P., Mr. J. A. Campbell, M.P., Mr. E. Marjoribanks, M.P., Sir James Watson, Mr. C. Tennant, M.P., Mr. C. Cameron, M.P., Sir W. Thomson, Mr. J. Ramsay, M.P., Principal Caird, and Mr. John Albert Bright. In responding, Mr. Bright said:—

“A continuous examination of all political questions, an application of them to the standards of justice and morality, justifies the growing belief of this country that whatever the people have a right to have, whatever is good for them, whatever they claim from Parliament, Parliament is continually, one succeeding Parliament after another, more and more disposed to grant. What we have to do now is to look backwards, and there we see what I call the vanishing darkness. What else we have to do is to look forward, where we see the advancing light, and I am quite sure all men who are of my age and who have had the opportunity of seeing what England was forty or fifty years ago, and of seeing what it is now, must be conscious that our legislation has immensely improved; that the sympathy between the governed and the governors is stronger than it was then; and that all those who wish for peace in England, and prosperity and happiness within her borders, must rejoice in the main in the changes which have been made, and must feel their hearts opened to receive propositions for such further changes as may be thought to be good. (Cheers.) I sometimes think that by-and-bye party politics will almost die out, for there do not seem very many questions now on which great conflicts can arise. Every Parliament they are diminishing, and perhaps we shall come to be a happy company in which we have hardly anything to disagree about. (Cheers.) But whether that be so or not, I exhort all men who see what has been done in the past to have faith in it, and to believe that legislation founded on the highest and the noblest and the most moral principles is the legislation which the people have a right to obtain, and from which they may hope to gain the greatest advantage.” (Cheers.)

Before leaving the neighbourhood of Glasgow, Mr. Bright fulfilled a promise he made the previous autumn, to visit Coatbridge, to see the monument erected to the memory of Janet Hamilton, the Langloan poetess, a remarkable self-taught literary character, who died at the age of 80 in 1875. Mr. Joseph Wright, the secretary and treasurer of the subscription fund for the erection of the monument, was first visited by Mr. Bright, at his residence in Academy Street, and then the party waited upon Marion Hamilton, the favourite daughter of the poetess, who resides in Sunnyside. She recited to Mr. Bright one of her mother's poems, “Effie.” The memorial fountain at Langloan was next visited, where Mr. Bright drank the crystal water to the memory of the author of “Effie,” and then stepping

across the street they inspected the house in which she had lived and died. Mr. Bright was cheered frequently in the street, whenever he was recognised.

On the 18th of April he was present at the marriage of Mr. W. S. B. McLaren, one of his nephews, to Miss Eva M. Müller, youngest daughter of the late Mr. Wm. Müller, who for many years resided in Chili, and afterwards at 86, Portland Place, London, and Hill Side, Herts. Mr. McLaren is the youngest son of Mr. Duncan McLaren, who represented Edinburgh in the House of Commons for many years. Although neither bride nor bridegroom is a member of the Society of Friends, yet on account of the connection of Mr. McLaren's family with that body, and the preference of the bride for their form of marriage, it was decided that the wedding should be solemnised at the Westminster Meeting House. There was no wedding breakfast, but instead the wedding party, which numbered about sixty, met at the house of the bride's mother the evening before, when a wedding supper was given. Mr. Bright, in proposing the health of the newly-married pair, made some humorous remarks on the frequency with which of late he had been called upon to propose this toast. He remarked, however, that weddings had their sober as well as their merry side. The brightest days were succeeded by days of cloud, and it was for the pair themselves largely to determine which of these should most prevail. Out of a married life of more than thirty years he had found how happiness increased and not diminished, the later years being happiest of all. He could commend to the lady the son of the best of fathers and the best of mothers, who he believed would be found worthy of every expectation. Taking for granted that his choice was as judicious as hers had been, they might all rely on hearing of the truest happiness and the highest usefulness as the result of this union.

A few days afterwards, Mr. Bright, Mr. Broadhurst, Mr. Samuel Morley, and Mr. Richards, as representative Nonconformists, signed a public declaration expressing the conviction that the existing prohibition of marriage with a deceased wife's sister is an oppressive and unjustifiable restraint upon the liberty and happiness of a large number of persons, and that the objections commonly urged against the proposed amendment of the law are unfounded or hypothetical, and are not held by the great body of Nonconformists, or by the majority of the public.

The Liberation Society held their thirteenth triennial conference in the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the evening of the 2nd of May. Mr. John Bright presided, and said:—

"Now, the theory of many good people in this country who support this union—the theory of the union is this, that the Church tends to make the State more Christian; that is, more just and gentle, more merciful and peaceful. I propose to ask your attention to two or three points which I think will answer that question, and will meet, in my opinion, that unsound and baseless theory. I will ask you for a moment to look at one great question in which, laggard as we still are, we have made some progress, and that is, the condition of the criminal code in this country in past years. I suppose it is fair to assume that the Bishops of the Established Church are of the most learned of the clerical order, and that they are esteemed also the most holy and the most Christian. We know they are members of the Legislature, and a very important body in the House of Lords. They, therefore, with their position, and with their character, and with their representative office as standing there—not indeed for the whole people, but for all that portion of the people connected with the Established Church—are in a position of vast influence, and I think it is to be lamented that this influence has not been so often as it might have been extended in behalf of kind and Christian and generous legislation. In 1776—there are great numbers of persons in this building whose parents, I daresay, were living at that time—Charles Wesley, a name to be revered, writing to Mr. Fletcher, of Madeley, a name not less to be revered, gives him this piece of information. He says, 'A fortnight ago I preached the condemned sermon to above twenty criminals. Every one of them, I have good reason to believe, died penitent. Twenty more must die next week.' Now, if you will remember that in that day the population of London was probably not more than a quarter of its present population, you can form some idea of the terrific cruelty of a penal code that should some Monday morning, and again in a fortnight or three weeks, on another Monday morning, send more than twenty criminals to the gallows, and not for the grievous offence of deliberate murder, but for offences for which now the bulk of those criminals would not have had more than six or twelve months' imprisonment. A few years after that, and within a year of the time of my life, a Bill was brought into the House of Lords, the object of which was to enact that henceforth the punishment of death should not be inflicted on persons who had committed robberies, which we should call now petty larcenies, in a house or shop, to the value of five shillings. Well, that Bill was rejected by the House of Lords by a majority of thirty-one to eleven, and in the majority of thirty-one there were six bishops and one archbishop. It may be said, and said with a good deal of force—in fact, with absolute truth—that those were barbarous and cruel times, though this last one is a time which can be remembered by some in this building—by one, or more than one, I believe, on this platform. But, it may be said, 'Those were cruel times, and you have no right to find fault with the bishops and archbishops that they were not less cruel than the population among whom they lived.' But a hundred years before that time, when William Penn established his great colony of Pennsylvania, he swept off at once—or, rather, he did not re-enact in that colony any of the cases in which the punishment of death could be inflicted, except it were in cases of deliberate murder. There were, therefore, men—good men—in this country a hundred years before the time I am speaking of—Christian men, men whom this State and Church thought it right to persecute, who knew what was true and right and Christian with regard to this penal code. And there were not wanting abundant evidences in our own country from which the dignitaries of the Church in the House of Lords might at that time have known what it was becoming them as Christian ministers to do. But to show how little influence the Christian Church, the Church of England, had with the Government of our country in these matters, let me tell you that up to the reign of George the First there were in this country sixty-seven offences that were punishable with death. Between the accession of George the First and the termination of the reign of George the Third—I think within those limits—there were added one hundred and fifty-six new crimes to which the capital punishment was attached. Now, during all these years, as far as this question goes, our Government was becoming more cruel and more barbarous, and we did not find, and have not found, that in the great Church of England, with its ten, fifteen, or twenty thousand ministers, and with its more than a score of bishops in the House of Lords, there ever seems to have been a voice raised, or an organisation formed, in favour of a more merciful code, or any condemnation of the enormous cruelty which our law was continually inflicting. Was not Voltaire justified in saying that the English were the only people who murdered by law? But we will pass on from this question. I will accept every excuse which archbishop, or bishop, or clergy, or churchman may offer. I know how slow men are to recognise the grounds for change, and how

content men in high places, inhabiting comfortable homes, and with all that is pleasant about them—I know how difficult it is for them to rouse themselves to undertake great changes and reforms such as this question required. But I pass on to another question—the question of the slave trade and of slavery. We, many of us, remember the agitation, not to put an end to the slave trade, though that required great and strong protest on the part of the people, but to put an end to slavery in our colonies. I think it is on record that on one occasion in the House of Lords, when it was proposed to put an end to the slave trade, and some speeches were made against that great iniquity, Lord Eldon, who for so long a time was Lord Chancellor, and therefore Speaker and president of that assembly, is reported to have said he did not believe, and could not believe, that the slave trade was so hostile to the spirit of Christianity, or else it could not possibly have been so generally, as it was, and had been, supported by the bench of bishops. What I complain of is that there is no trace in our modern history of the influence of the bishops, or indeed of the clergy, in favour of those great reforms which we now look back upon with intense satisfaction—mingled only with, if possible, a more intense regret that they were not effected years, or a century or two, earlier. The plea is, bear in mind, that the Church affects the State in the direction of Christian principle and Christian conduct. I am showing you that the Church, as represented in one branch of the Legislature, at any rate, has entirely failed of its duty in that respect. Let us go on to another question that is of still greater magnitude, and affects us even to our day. I speak of the foreign policy of our country, and of our incessant wars. We have had two centuries—I will say nothing of the time beyond that—we have had two centuries of almost incessant wars. In Europe, in Asia, in Africa, in North America, in South America, and in some portion of the Australian colonies, in China, wherever you look all over the map—if you had a map before you with a red cross at every point where the blood of your countrymen has been poured out, and generally poured out for no real object or service to your country—I think you would be astounded at the exhibition that that map would make; and during these wars we have spent thousands of millions of treasure, produced by the toil and the sweat and often by the misery of millions of our countrymen, and sacrificed hundreds of thousands of lives, with an amount of agony which no imagination can picture, and with a sacrifice of blood that it would be impossible to gauge. Now, I want to know how it comes that with so much of real, and so much more of what may be termed merely the profession of, Christianity in this country—how is it, with all the great authority of this Established Church, which was intended to guide the nation and the State in the way of righteousness, that on the whole you have seen no check to, and heard no condemnation of, a policy which to us now appears so unnecessary and so fearful? There are no protests—at least, I have never seen one—there are no protests, so far as I know, on the records of the House of Lords, and there has been no great protest from these good people through the Press. I recollect an anecdote, which just occurs to me, that will in a little way explain this. Less than thirty years ago many of you will remember that the country was engaged in a sanguinary struggle with the Empire of Russia. The late Bishop of Winchester (Bishop Wilberforce) was a man with whom I had often pleasant conversation on public questions, and I met him occasionally at dinner, and he was always extremely friendly to me, although in some things we were so far apart. He told me that with regard to the Crimean war his opinion agreed with mine. He thought it unnecessary and unjust, and greatly to be lamented. I suggested to him whether it might not be good for him and for the country if he would take some opportunity, in his place in the House of Lords, of addressing to the House, and to the Government, and to the nation, a speech upon that question corresponding with the views that he had then explained to me. Well, he looked serious—and I have no doubt he felt the question to be a very serious one—and he said that he had taken that matter into his deliberation, and he had not been able to convince himself that taking that course would be productive of more good than it would of harm, and, therefore, that he had remained silent. Now, it is easy to understand how he might with perfect honesty come to that opinion. He might feel that in the hurry of the passion that pervaded the minds of the people, and even of many of those in the circle in which he lived, probably or possibly he might not do very much good in the way of peace, as in a fever of that kind no man can, but that he might diminish his own power of usefulness in the particular channel in which it was more especially his duty to employ himself. I do not mention this for the purpose of throwing the slightest blame upon the bishop, but I can see how, in his position as a member of the House of Lords and a dignitary of the State Church, he

might find it extremely difficult to rise in his place and to make a speech at variance with the Ministers who sat by him, at variance with the vast majority of the House, and at variance, as I suppose he would conclude it would be, with the immense preponderance of opinion in the Church of which he was so eminent a member. Now—and I hope those who will criticise what I say, and they are not a few, and they who disagree with me, and perhaps condemn me—I wish they would tell me why it is that the Christian Church in this kingdom as against the crimes of the State such as I have described—and I might add others—that the Christian Church and its bishops and its clergy for the most part are dumb? About five hundred years ago there lived a Franciscan monk at the Court, I think, of Louis of Bavaria. His name was William Occam, and he deserves to be remembered for the large amount of truth that he put into a very few words. He said, addressing the Emperor, ‘Thou defendest me with the sword, and I will defend thee with the pen,’ and if you will trace the course of history for the 500 years that have since passed over, you will find that where there has been a Church influencing the people allied with the State, it has almost uniformly defended whatever was the policy of the potentate or the Government, and on the other hand the Church has been supported, not by the sword only, but by all the influence of the Government with which it was allied. I won’t dwell upon anything further that has taken place so far back as 500 years. I will come to our own time, and I will refer to what took place so late as September last, an event, as you know—whatever may be said about its necessity, whatever preceded it, whatever will be the result—an event in our history very sad and very lamentable. There was a city bombarded and burnt, and there was a battle fought. Now, the Church has not been dumb upon that question. You know, of course, that what I may call an ecclesiastical prince and a great ruler in the Church spoke to the people in regard to that question. What did he say?—because what a man of that mark says must be understood to represent what a great many people are supposed to think. In a letter to the Churches he made observations which were introductory, or recommendatory, of a prayer which he offered for their acceptance. In the letter he spoke in this manner. He said, ‘Mourning as we do for those who have fallen for their country’—well, we all mourn, I hope, for those that have fallen for their country. But this Christian minister, apparently, had not in his mind at all the ten Egyptians who fell for every one Englishman. I do not comprehend that kind of mourning. I mourn for them all. Well, then, he said further, that ‘our war against anarchy was an inevitable war.’ I am not going to contest that, or to argue the question in the least. You know, of course, my opinion. I am only at liberty to say this, that I believe those who know most about it believe that it was not an inevitable war. But I leave that, because it is quite possible, and, indeed, very likely, that there are differences of opinion in this vast assembly on this question. I come now to the words of the prayer, and that is what I ask you to consider for a moment. I had wished that I could have avoided mentioning this on this occasion; but I felt that it would be an abandonment of duty if I let this opportunity pass without expressing to you somewhat of the feeling which this matter excited in my own mind. An ancient heathen poet—I am not sure whether the most ancient of them all—who dealt a good deal in narratives of war, said—

‘Unhallowed is the voice
Of loud thanksgiving over slaughtered men.

And if that could be said some thousands of years ago by a heathen writer, at least we might expect some little consideration from a dignitary of a Christian Church in this century of the Christian era. Now, these are the words to which I wish to call your attention. In the prayer he says—and this was sent round to all the churches—I know some cases, I have heard of them, in which the clergymen were too much shocked to permit them to be read—he said, addressing the Supreme Ruler, ‘Teach us to see that Thy hand hath done it, that Thou wast in the midst of our camp to deliver us, and to give up our enemies before us.’ You see what this is, put into plain words—that ironclad ships, bursting shells, a blazing town, the roar of artillery, the charge of bayonets, the ghastly heaps of the mangled and the dead—these were manifestations of the hand of the God of Mercy. But I must remind you that these, or something like these, have been the words which have been offered from high dignitaries of the Church during the last 200 years, probably on every occasion of our wars, be they just or unjust to the last degree. Now, I won’t describe that language by words that present themselves to me, for I do not want to say anything that is unnecessarily harsh or likely to hurt the feelings of such,

if there be such, as differ from me upon this question. But I venture to ask you, and I would ask the dignitary of the Church who used this language, and those who read it from their pulpits, is there no reason why the millions of people of this country absent themselves from the Churches? Is it possible that men with sentiments like these, daring to approach the Throne of the Eternal with thanksgiving for acts of this kind, can go down to the depths of society and bring up the poor and miserable, the abject, the forsaken, and the hopeless, who surround us on every side? I only think it proves the indestructible quality there is in the Christian faith, that it should have so long survived the treason of those who pretend to teach it. But I pass now, before I conclude, to one or two other matters of a very different kind, and in which we observe an entirely different line of conduct. For example, three years ago, I think it is, the Houses of Parliament passed a Bill which many Nonconformists were greatly interested in, called the Burials Bill. You will remember, probably, that it was said that not less than fourteen or fifteen thousand clergy of the Church of England protested to the late archbishop against his course, and against the course of the Government and Parliament, in supporting and passing that measure. The late archbishop was not merely an archbishop and a Christian archbishop, but he was a statesman influenced to a large extent, I believe, by Christian principles. He had much to do with the passing of that Bill, and prevailing upon persons likely to be hostile to it to view it at least with something like acquiescence, if they could not entirely approve. But the clergy found their tongues. They co-operated, they conspired, they signed memorials, they joined in a great demonstration against that Bill. Let us come to another question that is just now—or coming just now—before Parliament. There are two questions. I think it probable that the one you are just now taking an interest in is the question of the admission of men to the House of Commons who shall not be required to take an oath; and I have seen much lately that convinces me that many men are more willing to worry a Government than to honour God. On this question, no doubt—I judge only from the public papers—clerical organisations are actively employed to thwart the purpose of that measure. But there is another question that is coming before Parliament soon, and which has been before Parliament almost all the time that I have been there—that is, a reform of the marriage laws, which is necessary for the comfort and happiness of some thousands of families in this nation. You know that there is a sort of clerical Parliament that has been sitting lately, which is called Convocation. I can never see anything there that tends to what I should call freedom and justice and reasonable concession to the people. On this question they are passing resolutions of, I was going to say, an audacious positiveness. They seem to think it amazing that anybody should take a different view, and yet at this very moment, if statements I have heard are not erroneous, there is a majority in the House of Lords in favour of that Bill. It would have passed last session if only the temporal peers had had the vote. The bishops, the representatives of a section of the English people, were the opponents, and I am told—though I have not examined the list myself, but I think it is stated on good authority—that their votes rejected the Bill. But whether there be a majority there or not, this, at any rate, is certain, that if the House of Commons were assembled with its 650 members there is a majority of more than 150, I am told of 200, in favour of that Bill. And yet with this vast pronouncement on the part of the people of Great Britain, a few, a handful of ecclesiastics, twenty or four or five-and-twenty in number, sitting in one House of Parliament, reject this measure, condemn thousands of families to unhappiness during their lifetime, and condemn thousands of children, wholly guiltless, as I believe their parents are guiltless—yes, I say, condemn thousands of children, innocent, as I believe their parents are innocent, to the brand of illegitimacy. I hope nobody will suppose that I am ignorant of the fact—nay, I believe it most fully—that there are bishops who are excellent men, and that there are thousands of clergymen of the Established Church who in their various parishes and offices, as far as they know, do honestly perform their duties, and do wish to be what the theory intends they should be—lights to guide their parishioners in the better way; and, of course, we all know that amongst the vast Church population in this country, men and women, there are multitudes who can claim to be possessed of and to exercise every virtue at least on an equality with the best of such amongst the Nonconformists. But then there comes the question of the alliance with the

State. The Established Church, if it were not established, would still be a Church. For anything I know it would be two Churches, and the bishops, I presume, would be bishops as the bishops in Ireland are still bishops, and the clergy would have their congregations, and there is not one particular in which you could show that the actual useful work of any bishop or clergyman would be less than it is now, and less fruitful for everything that is good. But, then, when they are allied with the State they are dumb, as I have said, when the State does anything wrong; and you only hear them in any transaction of the State when the State is willing to do some act of justice to the people. I think that this mode of proceeding on the part of the clergy and the great powers of a great establishment is one which is not calculated to elevate the Christian idea in the minds of the people, but rather to shut out vast numbers of the people from any fair and open consideration of the claims of the Christian faith. Now, I complain, then, of the Established Church in this broad manner, that it does nothing to guide the State in the way of righteousness; that it is in certain respects the bond slave of the State; that in all the great matters which most affect our country the bishops and the clergy are dumb, and their activity is shown when any comparatively small measure is discussed which they think treads a little upon their position and their supremacy. Well, now, what will come? I cannot hope, and many here cannot hope, to live to see it, but probably many here will see it. Looking at the growth of your cause as manifested here to-night, and by many other tokens; looking to the bondage of the Church, and the great schism which is continually widening within its borders; looking to the growing earnestness which I believe there is amongst the clergy, and I hope amongst many of the laity, there seem to me to be signs that it will not be in the power of Prime Ministers and Cabinets, of peers and benches of bishops, to prevent the actual—not very early but not very remote—triumph of your cause. The Church as an Establishment will perish. But as a Church, when that event has taken place, it will flourish far more in the right way of flourishing than it has done when tended by the State. When free it will look back with horror on the chains from which it has been delivered, and it will exult with unspeakable rejoicing at the freedom by which it has been enriched. And the people will have additional reasons for clinging to it, and I do not doubt for a moment—I speak with as solemn a belief as I have ever uttered upon any question—that the religion, the Christian religion, taught by the Free Churches of England, will be far more acceptable hereafter to the millions of our population.”

On the 30th of May Mr. John Bright was present at the marriage of his eldest son, Mr. John Albert Bright, to Miss Edith Eckersley Shawcross, daughter of Mr. W. T. Shawcross, manufacturer, Foxholes, Rochdale. The ceremony was performed at the Unitarian Chapel, Blackwater Street, Rochdale, the place of worship attended by the bride's family. Thousands of persons assembled near the chapel, but the building accommodated only about 250 persons, and the invited guests numbered about 70. The newly-married couple and Mr. John Bright and guests passed through the crowded streets in twenty-two carriages amidst continued cheering. After their honeymoon tour, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Bright made their home at Rose Hill, a villa close by “One Ash.”

CHAPTER XLVI.

A NOBLE TRIBUTE TO BRIGHT.

The Completion of Mr. Bright's Twenty-Fifth Year as Member for Birmingham--
—A Memorable Meeting in Bingley Hall—Banquet at the Town Hall—Earl
Granville's Comments on Mr. Bright's Career—Mr. Bright Entertained by the
Mayor—The Junior Liberal Club—The Departure—Charged with Breach of
Privilege—His Defence—The Motion Defeated.

IN August, 1882, Mr. Bright completed the twenty-fifth year of his representation of Birmingham in the House of Commons, and long before this date his constituents had determined to commemorate the event by a public demonstration and other marks of gratitude for his faithful services. Mr. Bright at first, with his usual delicacy, tried to evade a public demonstration, but his constituents were firm in their resolve; and after the date was deferred, it was at last fixed to commence on Monday, June 11th, 1883, and extend over the whole week. On the previous Saturday evening, Mr. Bright arrived at Stratford-on-Avon from London, and was met at the railway station by Mr. Richard Curry, his son-in-law, with whom he stayed until the Monday morning. At half-past twelve on the day fixed he arrived at Small Heath station, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Curry, Mr. and Mrs. John Albert Bright, and Mrs. Bernard Roth, and they received a princely greeting, and were met by the Mayor of Birmingham (Mr. Alderman White), Mr. George Dixon (President of the Birmingham Liberal Association), Dr. R. W. Dale, Mr. Jesse Collings, M.P., Mr. Wiggin, M.P., and a large number of other gentlemen. Mr. Dixon presented to Mr. Bright a gold medal struck for the occasion, which bore the portrait of Mr. Bright, and on the reverse side the arms and motto of the borough, "Forward," and the inscription: "Birmingham Liberal Association, Bright Celebration, June, 1883. The Right Hon. John Bright, elected M.P. for Birmingham August, 1857. Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform."

The Mayor welcomed Mr. Bright, on behalf of the corporation and the inhabitants of Birmingham, assuring him that his visit would gladden many hearts. Mr. Bright, in the course of his reply, said—

"All the time I have been member for Birmingham I have been treated with a generosity and sympathy and assistance which perhaps no other representative in

Parliament—few certainly—has received from his constituents. Mr. Dixon has been kind enough to hand me this medal, which is of a very valuable metal, a metal which I suppose is perpetual in its duration, if it is not intentionally got rid of. (Laughter.) I hope it will remain with my son, or with others of my children, and that they may bear in mind at some time when I am not with them, that it was presented to me on a remarkable occasion, and by gentlemen, friends of mine, to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, which, however long I may live, I shall never be able to repay.”

The procession, a mile and a half long, was then marshalled into order with its numerous bands of music, and Mr. Bright, amidst vociferous cheering, entered an open carriage, with his two daughters and the Mayor, and rode in the rear of the procession through the principal streets of the borough. The route was crowded throughout, and it seemed as if the county had proclaimed a holiday. Countless thousands had also arrived from distant towns to witness the memorable event, and the processionists were heartily cheered. A notable feature was a carriage containing the surviving members of the 1832 Political Union. There were thirty-five of the veterans, and the youngest of the party was seventy-two years of age. They carried with them the battered banner of the Union, and the drum which heralded the news in Birmingham of the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832.

Before the procession arrived at its destination, Mr. Bright's carriage took a short cut, and reached the office of the Aston Local Board before the head of the *cortége* arrived, and Mr. Bright himself took up a position at one of the windows. The whole of the procession thus passed in review before him, every person uncovering and saluting him in passing. At the end of a four or five miles' march, the processionists entered the Aston Lower Grounds, where in the evening a series of entertainments took place in the great hall; concerts were given by the Canadian Jubilee Singers, and out of doors a minstrel troupe and several military bands gave performances. After the concerts there was dancing in the meadow, in the wood, and in the great hall.

Mr. Bright became the guest of Mr. George Dixon, his former colleague, and spent the day following in his host's suburban retreat at Edgbaston.

One of the prominent features of the celebration was the immense gathering in Bingley Hall on the Wednesday evening, for it was computed that at least 20,000 persons were present, and, although 15,000 were admitted without tickets, there seemed to be a wonderful unanimity of feeling towards the hero of the evening. The approach of Mr. Bright was heralded with an ovation of cheering such as is seldom heard. He was accompanied by Mr. Dixon, Mr. Chamberlain, M.P., the Mayor,

Mr. Duncan M'Laren, and Dr. Dale. A band struck up "Auld Lang Syne," and the vast assembly joined in singing this Scottish song, which touched the tender theme of old acquaintance, and moistened many an eye. Mr. George Dixon presided, and explaining the object of the meeting, presented to Mr. Bright an address from the Birmingham Liberal Association in which occurred the following :—

"Birmingham invited you to become its representative solely on the ground of your great services to the nation, and for your known devotion to the cause of progress and reform; you accepted the call, trusting to the traditions of the town, and to the fidelity of its people. These were the relations of representative and constituents established at the outset of our association. These relations have remained unbroken and unaltered from that day to this. Neither upon our part nor upon yours has there even passed so much as a shadow of wavering or distrust. With the lapse of years our confidence has grown into an instinct, and our esteem has deepened into affection. We count it one of the chief distinctions of Birmingham, we regard it as one of our most precious memories, that so large a portion of your public life should have been bound up with ours. We cherish the hope that, so long as your life endures, the bond now existing between us will never be broken. We need not recall the vital questions which have been raised and settled, the beneficent reforms which have been effected, and the measure of progress which has been achieved during the period of your services as one of the members for Birmingham. These are written in the history of our country; and there, also, is imperishably recorded the great share which you have had in bringing them about. There is no reform for which you have pleaded that has not received support from your countrymen, and recognition from the legislature. The freedom of commerce, the extension of the franchise, the liberation of the press from unwise restrictions, the completion of the rights of citizenship by the promotion of religious equality, the claims of the peoples of India to just administration, the concession of ecclesiastical and agrarian reforms in Ireland, the maintenance of the Liberal watchwords of Peace, Retrenchment, and Reform—these have been the objects of your ceaseless endeavours; to these you have been faithful in all vicissitudes of political fortune, and under all circumstances of personal trial, undismayed by momentary failure—undeterred by persistent obloquy. And, thanks in a great measure to your advocacy, the principles for which you have contended from your entrance into Parliament until now are largely embodied in acts of legislation. . . . For our own share, we desire to keep this day in perpetual remembrance by the erection of a memorial statue in our town, so that our children and our children's children, for generations to come, may know the form and features of one of whose long-continued and faithful service Birmingham is proud, whose name it cherishes as a household word, and whose memory it will revere."

Dr. R. W. Dale next presented, on behalf of the Liberals of Birmingham, Mr. Frank Holl's portrait of Mr. Bright, and a silver dessert service, which had cost 600 guineas, and was one of Elkington's masterpieces. It consists of a centre-piece, a plateau, two end-pieces, and four *compotiers en suite* in the Renaissance style. The work is of oxydised silver, relieved with dead gilding, and the artistic execution of the details is the best the country can produce. There are figures with an olive branch representing Peace, others with a laurel wreath representing Plenty, and youthful bearers of cornucopiæ. The classic pillars supporting the glass dishes, specially designed by Osler, are ornamented with roses and other flowers. On the base of the shield, wreathed

with myosotis and forget-me-nots, is the recipient's monogram. The plinth of the centre plateau gives in relief a view of Birmingham Town Hall, a record of the occasion, the monogram of the Liberal Association, and the borough arms. There is inscribed "Presented to the Right Hon. John Bright, M.P., by the Birmingham Liberal Association, on the completion of his twenty-fifth year as Member for the Borough. June, 1883."

"We, who have heard him so often," said Mr. Dale, "can never forget the music of his voice, the simplicity and noble strength of his English style, the admiration of scholars, and intelligible to the least cultivated of the people. We have laughed many a time at his humour, which has exhilarated his friends, and has inflicted so often pleasant and wholesome torment on his political opponents. We have been charmed by the felicity of his illustrations, drawn sometimes from the most famous of English poets, and sometimes from the most obscure, but by preference from those ancient and venerable Scriptures which are dearer than all other books besides to the hearts of the English people. Again and again we have felt the force of his massive common sense, we have been moved to tears by his pathos, and we have been kindled to passion by his glorious declamation. But, Sir, the hearts of a great population are not to be won by eloquence alone, no matter how splendid, and still less can eloquence hold fast their loyalty through all the vicissitudes of five-and-twenty years. We are here to acknowledge that Mr. Bright has rendered immense and incontestable services to ourselves and to the whole country. These services it is not for me to attempt to recite to-night. For nearly forty years, largely as the result of his labours, bread has been more plentiful in the homes of the poor all England over. (Cheers.) Since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 we have never known the miseries of famine. (Applause.) If our harvests have failed we have been fed with the harvests of all the world. (Cheers.) These services alone would have been sufficient to secure for Mr. Bright lasting gratitude and renown. But in addition to this he, beyond all other men who took part in the great struggle for reform, achieved the political emancipation of thousands of Englishmen in all our great towns. (Applause.) But, Sir, I venture to say that the affection and the veneration which Mr. Bright has inspired are not fully explained either by his eloquence or by the magnificent services that he has rendered to the country. The man is greater than his eloquence, the man is nobler than his services. (Loud cheers.) We forget the genius of the orator and the political achievements of the statesman in our admiration for himself. (Applause.) And the reason of this is plain: in the heart of every one of us there is an invincible conviction that the true nobility and glory of human life come from courageous fidelity to duty, and in circumstances of great peril Mr. Bright has always been loyal to his conscience. Slander never turned him aside—(hear, hear)—from what he believed to be the path of righteousness, nor mockery, nor insult, nor hatred. He never quailed before the power of the great, and when for a time fidelity to conscience brought upon him storms of unpopularity, and he lost the confidence of the people he loved and served, Mr. Bright remained faithful still. (Cheers, renewed again and again.) I believe that he has elevated the national ideal of political morality—(hear, hear)—and the value of that service cannot be measured. His incorruptible integrity is the chief secret of the confidence and enthusiastic loyalty with which we have come to regard him. (Cheers.) To a man like Mr. Bright, with powers so great, with an influence in this nation so immense, the review of his public life to which he is called to-night must have a certain solemnity in it. We hope indeed that for a long while to come—(hear, hear)—his integrity, his sagacity, his knowledge of public affairs will continue to guide and to strengthen the great Liberal party. (Cheers.) But we are reminded, by the grey hairs on his head, which to him, being found in the way of righteousness, are a crown of honour—(loud and prolonged cheering)—we are reminded, I say, that he has reached the age when the limits of this mortal life begin to melt into a wider horizon. He must sometimes anticipate the judgment of posterity on his public services, and sometimes he must anticipate a judgment still more awful and august. But for ourselves we are here to say that, in our judgment, he has discharged his great trust with a noble courage, and with a stainless honesty—(loud cheers)—and has served us and the nation well. (Loud cheering.) And now,

Mr. Bright, it is my great honour, on behalf of the Liberal party in Birmingham, to offer to you the gifts on the table before me, and the portrait of yourself now hanging on the walls of the Royal Academy. We ask you to accept these gifts as expressions of our affection, of our confidence, of our veneration. We ask you to accept them as lasting memorials of the pride and the gratitude with which we look back upon the five-and-twenty years during which you have represented us in the House of Commons. (Cheers.) We trust that these gifts will remind your children and your children's children of the high place you held in the hearts of your fellow-countrymen. (Hear, hear.) The grateful blessings of the poor were yours, for you have lessened their miseries. (Cheers.) The confidence of the great mass of your fellow-countrymen is yours, for you have redressed their political wrongs. (Cheers.) You have won the respect of the most worthy of your opponents, and you have won the enthusiastic devotion of your friends. In every land where the English tongue is spoken you are honoured as the foremost champion in these times of truth, of freedom, of justice, and of peace. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) These, Sir, are glories which surpass the most splendid rewards of mere personal ambition. They

‘Make the pageantries of kings like shadows seem
An unsubstantial dream.’”

(Loud cheers.)

One hundred and fifty addresses were next presented to Mr. Bright; they were brought by an army of delegates, who felt it an honour to be the bearers of such appreciative testimony from their respective towns. The National Liberal Club sent one, and it was signed by Mr. Gladstone. The one presented by the National Reform Union (Manchester) related that:—

“There are amongst us, Sir, men who have been active members for the Union since it was founded in 1864 by your friend and colleague in the Anti-Corn-Law League, Mr. George Wilson; and they remember well the leading part you took in the first great agitation which the Union was called upon to promote, that, viz., for securing a wider and more equitable distribution of political power. Some there are also—but, alas! now few in number—who worked under the leadership of yourself, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. Wilson, in that earlier struggle for free trade; while others of us only began to take an active part in politics after you had reached and passed the meridian of your life. But to all of us alike—whether we have grown old with you, and have thus had the advantage of marching by your side along the path of progress, or whether we have only been able to follow in your footsteps—your life has been an example, your career an encouragement, your name a stronghold of political faith. There have been times when the great party to which we all belong has been in danger of losing sight of the end and aim of its existence. Then your singleness of purpose shone forth like a beacon to keep us in the right course. When the principles which we all profess have been temporarily obscured by the passion of party or by consideration of so-called national expediency, your fidelity to principle has raised us above the influences of the moment. If we have ever felt uncertain and doubtful as to a particular course of political action, our confidence has been restored, or our doubt made certainty, by the attitude you have assumed—so strong has been our faith in your political sagacity and in the purity of your motives. It would be vain to attempt to enumerate all the great and beneficial movements which you have led or taken a leading part in promoting. With your name will ever be associated the acquisition by your fellow-countrymen of the blessings of free trade, a free press, and an extended franchise. Your voice was raised to plead for justice to Ireland, when few were found to hear your pleas, and fewer still to dare to echo them. The cause of liberty has ever found in you a ready and an uncompromising champion; and you have often striven, with a courage greater than that of the soldier, to stem the tide of war, even when it flowed with the full passion of a nation. Secure of popularity alike by the services you have rendered to the people and by the gift of marvellous eloquence with which God has endowed you, the breath of popular favour has never swayed your course, the influence of popular prejudice has never shaken your resolution. Basing your own conduct, in public as well as in private life, on the firm and immutable foundations of morality, you have consistently endeavoured to shape England's policy and secure her well-being by a

strict application of the same principles to her national life. . . . There lie before us in the immediate future political problems of great difficulty and vast importance; and, although you have grown grey in your country's service, and have already passed the threescore years and ten to which the span of human life is generally restricted, yet we would fain hope that you may be spared to guide us through them, and to see the fulfilment of aspirations which you have done so much to create, and which so largely depend on you for their achievement."

The other addresses were presented by delegates from Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Durham, Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, Bradford, Oldham, Bolton, Blackburn, Birkenhead, Halifax, Stockport, York, Hull, Bury, Warrington, Ashton-under-Lyne, Scarborough, Wakefield, Bootle, Bacup, Stalybridge, Duckinfield, Crewe, Doncaster, Llandudno, Greenock, Helensburgh, Hawick, Jedburgh, Wigan, Todmorden, Accrington, Barrow-in-Furness, Carnarvonshire, Dumfries, Chester, Londonderry, Coleraine, Armagh, and many other towns. The addresses, as they were received from the delegates, were placed on a table, where they grew to an enormous pile, and showed how their recipient had not lived in vain, and how he was respected by every good man.

When Mr. Bright rose to speak, the vast audience rising with him cheered joyfully. He was deeply affected by the warmth of the reception, and this unmistakable evidence of public gratitude, which "beamed forth to gild the evening of his day." When the cheering died away, and the listeners subsided into an attitude of hushed expectation, he began in his clear, strong, musical voice to emphasise terse sentences; and the humorous sentences, received with instant appreciation and laughter, came easily, and as if the speaker enjoyed them as much as the hearers. He referred to the freedom of industry, to the obnoxious Corn Laws, pointing out—

"That meat was made for mouths—that God sent not
Corn for the rich men only."

He next alluded to the improvement which has taken place in the condition of the agricultural labourer and the mechanic, to the cheapening of the necessaries of life, to the spread of education, and to many other advantages, which in the old telling manner he claimed to have come to the working classes mainly through the action of the vast changes which took place when the portals of industry were thrown open, and all the world was invited to supply our markets. He spent more than half an hour in this interesting review of legislation attempted and progress achieved, warming into fine eloquence as he spoke of the United States, the heralded solution of the question there between a protective tariff and a revenue tariff, the abolition of

slavery, and the future that lies before the great Republic when she shall have established a perfect system of free industry.

"Perhaps, though I am speaking to this vast assembly of my own countrymen," said Mr. Bright, "I may be permitted to address a word to the working artisan class of the United States of America. (Hear, hear.) I am not an enemy of the United States. (Renewed cheers.) I have fought her battle in this country—(cheers)—when, for a time, I was not sure that the contest would not go against us. (Hear, hear.) I have as much sympathy with the United States now as I had then; and as much, I think, almost as if I had been born upon her soil. (Cheers.) Well, I will say this to the working men and artisans of the United States, that centuries of legislation in this country—preceding centuries—have not done so much, have not conferred so great benefits upon the labour of England as have been conferred by the great Minister of forty years ago, Sir Robert Peel—(cheers)—and by Mr. Gladstone, the great Minister of to-day. (Loud cheers.) Will you permit me to dwell for a sentence or two upon the question as it affects the United States, in which we, and they, and all the world are greatly interested? I believe that the question in the United States as between a high protective tariff and a merely revenue tariff is nearing its solution. (Hear, hear.) Opinion is growing—facts, economic facts, which are irresistible, are coming to the front, and are offering themselves to the consideration of statesmen there, and of every intelligent man in that great Republic. There is an extraordinary condition of things there, which no other country in any age of the world has ever experienced or even dreamt of. There is an actual surplus revenue of thirty millions sterling. Why, our Chancellor of the Exchequer potters about with a million or two millions. (Laughter.) He puts a penny on the income tax one day, and another day takes it off again; one day he proposes to give a quarter of a million to the country gentlemen to help them to repair their roads, and then finds he cannot get the money and does not do it. (Laughter.) The Chancellor of the Exchequer of the United States, monarch, apparently, of all he surveys, deals with a lump sum, the magnitude of which you cannot measure and cannot conceive, but a lump sum of thirty millions sterling. Now, this thirty millions is fatal to the high protection party. The Government does not know very well what to do with it. It must either throw it away or spend it in something foolish and unnecessary, or else it must refuse to receive it—by reducing the duties. And there are other matters, which I need not go into, connected with their system of bonds, and with their banks, which I will not attempt to explain; but I think this is very certain, that next year—although this year they have made a little alteration in their tariff—next year the difficulty will be greater, and in two years there will be an election of President of the great Republic. When that contest comes there must be some question to divide parties. They could hardly fight if there was no question. (Laughter.) And now the great question of slavery has been settled for ever. (Applause.) It has been written for ever in the blood of hundreds of thousands of men that slavery shall never again exist upon that continent. (Cheers.) And the negroes in the South, who, they said, would die off if they were free—they are more numerous than ever—(laughter)—and being the only people in the South who did work before the war, they work now better than ever, because they receive the reward, the honest reward, of their labour. (Hear, hear.) Now, when that question comes to be discussed in the great forum of a nation of fifty millions of people, what must be the result? A very intelligent member of Parliament told me two or three years ago—I am not sure that I ever quoted his opinion before, but it is worth hearing, I think—he said that his Liberal opinions had been greatly strengthened by what he observed in the United States. (Hear, hear.) He said 'If you note what they do—a great many of them talk wildly and foolishly, but,' he said, 'they always act very wisely.' (Laughter and applause.) Well, two years hence, I believe that there will be a good deal of talk, and, perhaps, a good deal of it wild and foolish, but when that great people are brought to the issue, whether, having struck off the chain from the negro, they are to leave the fetters of protection upon the industry of their countrymen, I believe they will do before long what we have done—(cheers)—and they will declare it to be the inalienable right of every American, as it is the inalienable right of every Englishman, to spend his money in the cheapest market in the world. (Loud cheers.) Now, Mr. Dixon and my friends, if you will allow me, I think I am going rather to transgress what I mentioned at first. (Cries of 'No' and 'Go on.') I am very much tempted—not to satisfy the critics of whom I have

spoken—(laughter)—but to satisfy my mind in the train of argument into which I have been led—I feel almost disposed to enter for a moment upon the region of prophecy. (Laughter.) To me—perhaps I am sanguine, perhaps more ignorant than I deem myself—there opens before me a grand vision of the future. England and her colonies and dependencies at this moment have a population of fifty millions of persons. I won't go over the colonies where they are dwelling; but you know that there are, I suppose, five or six and thirty millions in this country; the United States by the last census had also fifty millions, they are supposed now to have fifty-five millions, and good judges say that by the end of the century, that by the time when a man of fifty in this audience reaches my age, the United States will possess a population of 100,000,000; India—a dependency of this country governed by our Government—India possessed 250,000,000 of souls—India is a Free-trade country—(hear)—with only one exception, its ports are open to all produce from all parts of the world. Now, what I want to suggest to you is this—that if it should come, as I believe it will come, that the United States will go down to a sensible revenue tariff, whatever that may be—I don't point the sum or the amount, but I mean a tariff which will permit large freedom of trade with all the nations of the world—then, if England, with our 50,000,000, and if America with her 50,000,000, growing rapidly to 100,000,000—if they take this course, what will be the effect upon other nations of the globe? What do Protectionists in Europe say now? They say 'It is all very well to tell us that England is in favour of Free-trade. Look at America. There is a popular Government, a Republic, every man voting—(hear, hear)—and there they have a system of protection most strenuous and most severe,' and therefore they say we, at any rate, may not be set down as fools and ignorant if we have protection here and follow the example of the free Government and the free people of North America. But, if the United States should make the change which I believe is impending, then the United States and England, with their hundred millions and more—they will be an argument of a different kind and of a different force to the nations of Europe. The Free-traders of every country will say—'Why the people in England, living under an ancient monarchy, are prospering with Free-trade, and the people of the United States, living under the flag of the Republic, have followed the example of England,' and they will say, 'We are trying to follow these countries in political freedom; why should we not follow them in the not less magnificent and beneficent path of a perfect freedom of industry?' (Loud cheers.) Now, one word to which this argument or picture leads me. May I ask you what, at this moment, are the two great curses of Europe? The one is the system of high tariffs, the war of tariffs; and the other is the war of arms, of armies. (Cheers.) The one is burdensome; in fact, both are burdensome at all times; the war of armies at times more than burdensome, if employed in destruction and slaughter. If you were to destroy the tariffs of Europe, you would destroy the pretence for the maintenance of the great armies of Europe. (Hear, hear.) But as I discuss it and consider it, the vision seems to grow upon me. Nations would become one in interest, the very jealousies would vanish as their ignorance of each other would vanish. If France and Germany in the year 1870—France and Prussia—if they had had no tariffs, if their people were trading from day to day between the two countries as the French traded between the departments of France, and as we trade with Scotland, do you think it would have been possible to have brought these two great nations into a sanguinary war upon this stupid and foolish question, What prince in Europe shall be invited to occupy the throne of Spain?—(laughter)—a question in which neither Prussia nor France, in my opinion, had the smallest possible interest; and if thirty years ago Russia had had no tariff more than we had—if all the productions of England and her manufactures could have gone freely to Russia as the produce of Russia came freely to England, do you suppose it would have been possible in our manufacturing population to have excited the frenzy and the ferocity which were displayed during the continuance of that deplorable struggle? The fact is, neither emperors, nor kings, nor statesmen, nor the public press will be able to bring nations into war when those nations are united in their interest by perfect freedom of interests between them. (Loud applause.) And then the pretence for armies will be gone—I don't mean the pretence for armies which may be necessary for internal peace in some cases, as in some degree a police force—but those vast armies of Europe, now four millions of men—four millions of men, I will not say eating their own heads off, but eating other people's heads off—(laughter)—living on the industry of others, when they might be living honestly and happily at home upon their own industry. (Applause.) But when this shall come—and I think it will come—in that time the taxes upon all these peoples will be greatly lessened; their comfort will be increased; education.

you may rely upon it, will be more general; and the barbarity and the cruelty which distinguish Governments and people too much will be discouraged and denounced. In fact, if one may allow one's imagination a little play, I should say that we should have not a new heaven, but we should have a new earth. It would not be geographically greater than it is at present, but it would be greater in wealth, in comfort, and in human happiness. Forgive me if I dream; it may be so, but I will believe in a better time; if Christianity be not a fable, as I believe and you believe that it is not, then that better time must come. (Applause.)

'Earth's kindreds shall not always sleep,
The nations shall not always weep.'

(Loud and continued cheering.)

Mr. Chamberlain, the President of the Board of Trade, also addressed the meeting, and the gathering soon after dispersed.

On Thursday evening Mr. Bright was entertained by the members of the Birmingham Liberal Association at a banquet in the Town Hall. The Mayor presided over a large gathering. Earl Granville, in proposing the health of Mr. Bright, observed:—

"Now, I was not so intimately acquainted with Mr. Bright until he became an official colleague of mine. I have now had a very long acquaintance with him. I have very often conversed on some serious subjects with him, and I have more constantly been the victim—the willing victim—of his cheery and racy chaff—(laughter) but I never attempted repartee, and, indeed, it is not an easy thing to give a repartee to Mr. Bright. I never heard Mr. Bright beaten in repartee except by one person, and that was a bishop. (Renewed laughter.) Now, as regards Mr. Bright's entrance into official life, I remember in 1853, when Lord Aberdeen did me the honour of asking me to join his Administration, and told me the composition of his future Cabinet, that I ventured to say to him: 'If you intend to make your Cabinet so comprehensive, why don't you make an attempt to obtain the services of Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright?' (Cheers.) Lord Aberdeen said that that was his personal wish, and I am not surprised at it, because nobody appreciated Mr. Bright more than that great statesman did. Lord Aberdeen said he should have liked it himself, but he feared it would alarm public opinion. (Laughter.) Now, this answer of Lord Aberdeen has recurred to me each time that Mr. Bright has entered, or rather has been pressed to enter, the Cabinet on three different occasions. It appeared to me that, instead of exciting alarm, Mr. Bright's entry into official life was a matter of satisfaction to many millions of his countrymen. (Cheers.) In the same way, when Mr. Bright retired three times—once on account of bad health, secondly on account of our disastrous electoral defeats, and thirdly, I regret to say, in consequence of conscientious difference upon one subject, and one subject alone, with his colleagues, he retired with the goodwill of all; and I must say, when I just allude to what I thought an act very graceful and in excellent taste, Lord Salisbury, who we know has no exaggerated prejudices in favour of the Liberal party—(laughter)—paid as graceful and as true a compliment to Mr. Bright as has really been paid in Birmingham during the present week. (Cheers.) This is the place and the time for giving a magnificent reception to Mr. Bright. Between forty and fifty years ago Mr. Bright wooed and obtained the love of a stately dame, then of a high name and of great wealth and great power. Of course it is true to say that that love on her part continues to this very day, but in one moment of fickleness, not peculiar I am afraid to her sex—(laughter)—on a difference of a character which may happen in the best-regulated families—(renewed laughter)—that stately dame rejected Mr. Bright; and this great metropolis of the Midland Counties resolved to take Mr. Bright as her own. (Loud cheers.) I read the other day a quotation from a great German poet in which he said that the celebration of a marriage was a thing of bad odour. (Laughter.) Now, I trust that the great majority here present have learnt like myself that that is a poetical delusion. (Cheers and laughter.) But be that as it may, it does not apply to the thing that has been going on this week. (Cheers.) Mr. Bright at the time I have alluded to had incurred some unpopularity from his fearlessness and conscientious

adherence to what he thought right. As regarded his intellectual and physical strength there was at that time some doubt whether it could be maintained. Mr. Bright had not even strength enough to woo in person the new love, Birmingham, the great metropolis of the Midland Counties, rich in her diversified industries, in her institutions, in her public buildings, in her libraries, her great schools, in her enlightened and full municipal life, in the excellence and ability of her press, with her leading men noted for their public spirit, and the inhabitants generally for their bold and fearless intelligence—Birmingham has decided to celebrate this silver wedding. That event had every element of a love-match. It also had the character of a marriage, for the highest reason. I have heard it said that Mr. Bright has returned his love to Birmingham. So far it is not quite the love described by Shakspeare in 'King Lear':—

'A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable.'

It has not had that effect on Mr. Bright, who remains one of the greatest orators ever found on an English platform or perfected in an English Parliament. Mr. Bright is a master of his own mother tongue—(hear, hear)—he has knowledge; he has power of reason, of pathos, of humour; he has a manner which charms in public as it does in social life; he has a voice which attracts and which dominates. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Bright may wish to make use of some of those qualifications this evening; that he may wish to express to the thousands before me, as he did to the tens of thousands yesterday, the value he attaches to this extraordinary and unprecedented reception, which is given as an acknowledgment of the great services which he has rendered to his sovereign, to whom his chivalrous loyalty has always been of the warmest and most sincere kind, to his constituency, and his country." (Loud cheers.)

Mr. Bright then responded :—

"I suppose that I may fairly presume that my friends in Birmingham, and others from a distance, who have been at these meetings, are in the main persuaded that I have been actuated in my public life by an honest desire in all cases to support what I believe to be right—(cheers)—and also, perhaps, they give me credit for a not unintelligent apprehension of the public questions with which I have meddled. (Hear, hear.) And yet, notwithstanding this—and looking back, I think, on several occasions I have been right—I am sometimes struck with the strange fact that at every step there has been great opposition on the part of powerful individuals and powerful interests. During the whole of the forty years that I have been in public life, and in Parliamentary life, a large majority of that House to which Lord Granville belongs have been hostile to the views which I have entertained, and on not a few occasions a majority of the House of Commons has also differed from me. And, more than that, I suppose if I were to canvass the military classes—(laughter)—the clerical classes—(laughter)—the official classes, and the professional classes, I am not quite sure whether in any one of these could have been found generally a majority to support the views which I had taken upon me the liberty of expounding to my fellow-countrymen. (Hear, hear.) I ask myself why there should be this great difference of opinion. I may have had different opportunities and a different way of working out public questions, and I believe that was really the fact. I have never been influenced in any considerable question by the views of the Prime Minister of the day—(hear, hear)—or by the views of the distinguished leaders of Her Majesty's Opposition. (Renewed laughter.) I have thought that political questions generally are not of that obtruse character that a sensible and moderately well-informed man could not of himself come to a conclusion as to the right or the wrong of them. (Cheers.) . . . Now, fifty years ago it was my duty and practice from week to week to pay wages to a large number, many scores, perhaps two or three hundred, handloom weavers, and those persons lived in the villages in the neighbourhood where I lived. They brought their work in once a week, and after it was examined they were paid for it. The payment was not large, the labour was continuous, and I had great sympathy for persons to whom, if it had been possible, I should have been glad to have paid a higher rate of wages. But then, when a weaver had taken home his money to his wife and children who during the next week were to live upon his wages, I found out—it was not difficult to find it out—that he was not allowed to buy the articles required for his sustenance in the cheapest market. It was perfectly well known that the farmer in the United

States will give the weaver twice as much bread for his wages as the farmer in Lincolnshire; but it was then said 'the weaver must not go to the United States for his bread, but to the farmer in Lincolnshire.' That was done under the pretence that the farmers were to be protected, and that the labourers were to be better off; and this poor weaver, at his work week after week, year after year, was compelled to expend the small wages he received, not in the markets of the world, as he ought to have done, but in this bread market, which the laws of our country had fenced round, and in which alone he was obliged to go to expend the earnings of the week. Now I thought this was a very strange law. Whatever it might do for the landowner or farmer, it was only a law of direct and serious oppression to the weavers, with whom I came in contact from week to week; and I complained and came to the conclusion that in all certainty it was a most unjust law. Having got my eyes a little opened with regard to this one question, they opened still more, as men's eyes do after they get to see a little light. They opened more and more into the perfect day, and by and by we found that it was very wrong that cattle should be kept out of the country and that sugar should only come to us from the West Indies and from Cuba and Brazil except at a rate of duty which practically excluded it. But then there was the question of timber on which there was also a protective duty, and there was the protection upon ships. One after another of these things were found out to be unjust and evil, and under the pressure of public necessity and public opinion, all these things have been entirely redressed." (Cheers.)

On Friday morning the Mayor entertained Mr. Bright and about 150 gentlemen who had been attending the celebration during the week to breakfast in the Council House. In reply to an address of welcome, Mr. Bright spoke of the necessity which existed for us to inquire into what was our duty with regard to other nations. In this view, he said, there were two questions at present with regard to France which deserved most careful attention. The first was the question of a new Suez Canal, which had been rendered necessary by the ever-increasing traffic passing through the present water-way. He did not doubt that Lord Granville would endeavour to do all that was judicious and would not be led away by speculators; for great national interests were at stake, and also the concord of two nations. The next question was the Channel Tunnel. He ridiculed the fears of the military authorities, and said his impression was that the tunnel would be of enormous value to this country and to France. Every man, woman, and child had an interest in the tunnel being made, and he hoped that the extraordinary suggestions of alarm which had been offered would be utterly disregarded and repudiated by common sense. He concluded by saying:—

"I do implore you—I don't ask you to adopt what may be called extraordinary and abstract opinions on the question of war—I ask you to agree with Lord Derby, who made an observation before he left the previous Government which ought never to be forgotten, that the greatest interest of England is peace. (Cheers.) If it had not been for the wars of our predecessors, or the wars within two centuries of our time, it is impossible to say—if the efforts of our statesmen had been directed to an improvement of the internal condition of our country—it is impossible to say how great would have been the difference in the present position of the millions of the labouring classes amongst

us. It is for them I care most. They toil and they sweat, they work from early morn till even-time. Their reward—as far as our expenditure is compared with their reward—is generally but small, because although they have not many of them the same power of impressing upon the Government their views that we have, I say, looking at their condition, we are bound by all that is sacred if possible to bring together the nations of Europe and the nations of the North American continent, into a firm, constant, enduring, and blessed alliance with the people of our country; and it is for the sake of this that I have made these observations, and I trust that all that has been said here to-day, and what may be said on other occasions and felt and partly expressed, may not be without some result upon the public opinion of the country. (Cheers.) For your address, Mr. Mayor, I have only to thank you. I have exhausted in the course of the week the language of what I may call gratitude and thanksgiving, and I have no more words to use than those that I have already employed. I have had a reception here in Birmingham such as I could not have possibly contemplated, such as perhaps no other man has had at any time. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) I am humiliated when I think how much you have overrated anything that I have done. ('No, no.') I plead only that I have been, as far as I know, honest in the pursuit of public objects—(hear, hear)—without ambition for preferment; and if I have been compelled to separate myself from colleagues for whom I have the greatest respect, you may be quite sure it has only been done because I believed my duty to you and the public, and, what is still higher, my duty to my conscience, made it necessary that I should leave an official position—ay, in a country like this, with dignity and emoluments connected with it; but dignity and emoluments, and all that office can give, are valueless unless they are accompanied by the belief that they are held in consistency with one's duty, and with the honest endeavour to serve the people who have given me and shown me so much of their trust." (Loud and continued cheering.)

On the Saturday morning Mr. Bright was entertained to breakfast by the committee of the Birmingham Junior Liberal Club, and in his speech he gave an interesting sketch of his early connections with politics, and the state of the country before the passing of the first Reform Bill. At noon he left by train for Stratford-on-Avon, and was heartily cheered by his friends who had assembled to witness his departure. The remainder of Saturday and Sunday he spent at the residence of his son-in-law, Mr. Curry, and on Monday morning he left for London, and was in the House of Commons in the evening, to defend himself against a charge made by Sir Stafford Northcote of breach of privilege, for he had in one of his speeches in Birmingham accused the Conservative members with being in alliance with the "Irish rebel party," for the purpose of making it impossible for the majority of the House of Commons to do any good work for the country. The leader of the Conservatives had not been speaking many minutes when it became clear that the charge was very weak. Mr. Bright expressed himself not surprised that some of the passages in his speeches should have caused what in ancient phraseology was said to be "searching of hearts" among his opponents. He admitted that there was a sense in which the word "alliance" might be offensive and inapplicable, but he had not pointed to any compact. He

maintained, however, that the Conservatives and the followers of Mr. Parnell did, as a rule, practically act together in obstruction, and being asked to quote an instance, he gave two—viz., the unduly protracted debate on the Affirmation Bill, and the waste of Government time by the appropriation of Government nights—questions and debates arising thereon. The motion was defeated by a majority of thirty-four, and Mr. Bright's friends cheered heartily.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MR. BRIGHT'S ORATORY, &c.

Mr. Bright's Personal Appearance—His Audiences—His Reception—Oratory—Earnestness—Gesture—Pathos—Invective—Irony—Sarcasm—Simile—Allegory—Fable—Parable—Humour—Quotations—Perorations—Mr. Bright and Mr Cobden as Counterparts—The Art of Public Speaking—The Cobden Club—At Hawarden Castle.

THIS biography which is now drawing to a close would be incomplete without a description of the personal appearance, oratorical delivery, and moral manifestations of its hero.

The great orator and friend of the working class has been so often seen in public, and so repeatedly photographed, that his lineaments and figure are familiar to the civilised world. He may be described as robust of frame, five feet nine inches in height, broad chested, and of graceful deportment. His face is broad and full, and decidedly Saxon; his forehead high, expansive, and prominent, bordered with venerable locks silvered by time. Dark and heavy brows overhang his keen eyes, which are of a tender blue, full of sweet gravity, and wonderfully intellectual, which can flash fire, or melt into tears, and captivate all who come within the sphere of their influence. His mouth, though large, is firm and indicative of the greatness of his heart, and has an expression of good humour. The lips have, in their fleshy and massive outline, abundant marks of habitual reflection and intellectual occupation. "The streak of the unfaded rose still enlivens his cheeks." When animated during a speech his comely Saxon features brighten into unmistakable beauty, and when seen in the profile are even finer than when viewed from the front. The whole has an expression of fine intellectual dignity, candour, serenity, and lofty, gentlemanly repose.

For the last thirty years or more his oratory has been so popular that when he has given his promise to address a meeting in any town, the number of persons applying for admission tickets has exceeded by thousands that which the building could accommodate. The consequence is that thousands assemble round the door for the purpose of even obtaining a glance at the great orator; and so valuable are his speeches considered that at these meetings about sixty reporters are present to record every

sentence, and herald his speech, not only through the United Kingdom, but even across the broad Atlantic. As soon as he arrives the mass of people outside the building huzza vigorously, and this joyful announcement is heard with pleasure by the more fortunate assembled inside, who at once rise to their feet and direct their eager attention to the door by which he is expected. As soon as the hero of the evening is seen, he is welcomed with deafening cheers, and waving of hats and handkerchiefs. He walks quietly towards the table, apparently unaffected by the excited reception, but a close observer might detect that it is with difficulty he suppresses his emotion. So anxious are they to hear him speak that the preliminaries of the meeting are hurried through, and at length the orator stands up. He is received with rapturous and sustained applause, and while they are enthusiastically greeting him he quietly arranges his position, places his hat on the table before him, and on the rim of it lays his scanty notes, and then surveys the vast assembly with subdued emotion. Then he appears abstracted, as if summoning the mental powers to their work. As soon as there is a perfect calm he begins his speech in a low, quiet tone, which gradually gathers force, and increases in volume. It is the medium pitch, or conversational key, which is the most easy and harmonious both for speaker and hearer. The tone is natural, with graceful variations of the voice according to the subject upon which he speaks. It is of great compass, but exquisitely modulated, and from his lips the most trifling sentence becomes impressive. It is clear, round, full, mellow-toned, with a peculiar musical vibration in it which penetrates the air, and enables him to be heard with distinctness at a great distance with apparently little effort. His accents flow with artless ease, like a stream which gurgles its own music as it runs. He can equally sound the depths of pathos or scale the heights of indignation. His delivery is slow, candid, manly, weighty, and unhesitating, though he sometimes pauses as if to select words, which are "exquisitely sought," often consisting of one or two syllables, which are distinctly pronounced, and the full sound given to them. The simplicity and strength of the language strikes its meaning direct into the mind. He goes direct into his subject as an arrow flies, with no more curve than is necessary for hitting the mark, and this absence of prelude gives him an immediate grasp upon the attention of his hearers. He expresses himself with such forcible clearness that the highly cultivated and the unlettered alike feel its force and charm. The general effect is one of perfect

naturalness—a movement of mind upon mind free from mannerism, and he gives his hearers sufficient time to think as he proceeds. Not a single link in the chain of reasoning is lost by dropping the voice, or by haste in pressing along to the next sentence. His logic is never confused, nor his resources commonplace, and there is a fine sense of proportion in his speeches.

As soon as he begins to speak he becomes animated, and his countenance, dilating in every fibre, is impressed with a character of peculiar energy. He has the courage of Gideon, and his deportment gives an insight into the nature of his ardent mind. He seems alive only to the truth, which is the central quality of his speeches and the very soul of his eloquence. He is impressed with the importance of what he speaks, and of the consequences dependent upon it. Some critics were of opinion that his intense earnestness was incompatible with elevated statesmanship, but all history teaches that those who have brought about great good for mankind were men of intense and earnest natures. Further, it is well known that when a speaker is sensibly touched he easily influences his audience. No living statesman is more thoroughly imbued with moral enthusiasm than Mr. Bright, and it was the fervour of his nature which Lord Palmerston meant to sneer down when he addressed him as “the honourable and reverend gentleman.”

“I consider that when I stand upon a platform, as I do now, I am engaged in as solemn a labour as Mr. Dale when he addresses his congregation,” admitted Mr. Bright in one of his speeches; remarking further: “It is not only upon the affairs of the other world that men must be true to themselves and to their consciences. (Applause, and hear, hear.) The heart itself is often in these matters more at fault than the head; but if people would obey the true impulses of their consciences and their hearts, the progress of nations would be less interrupted than it is now, the misery of populations would be diminished, the unwisdom of our Governments would be checked, and we should find over all the earth a growth and a progress towards that brighter and happier day of which we see now only glimpses and the dawning, but of which more shall be seen by some generations that shall succeed us.”

The serenity of Mr. Bright's brow during the passionate earnestness of his appeals imparts additional weight to his influence by giving the idea of innate strength—of the repose which is imagined in the rock when the tempest is around it. His speech is the natural expression of a mind at once beautiful and strong.

The whole of his characteristics point to the conclusion that nature designed him for an orator, and his quick apprehensions of the wrongs which weigh upon the poorer classes and the oppressed, seem to have given their point and direction to the powers of his oratory, for it has been the study of his life to try

to remove the cause of suffering, or alleviate the woes and sorrows of the poor, the helpless, and the down-trodden. Possessing the poetical temperament, he is able to clothe his sentiments in language that goes at once to the understanding and the heart. His demeanour impresses his hearers that he is in earnest, for the whole man speaks, and convinces them that there is credit in his words, and that his main object is to improve humanity, and banish squalid poverty. Patriotism and deep though subdued earnestness are features of his strength.

The profound and meditative gravity of his expression, the natural play of his features, his sustained and measured utterance, the weighing of every reason, the deliberation of his tones, his self-collectedness and concentration, and the look of superiority by which he is characterised, fix a universal gaze upon him, and excite general curiosity. From whatever point of view his hearer looks upon his subject, he can make him see it by just and clear reasoning; and possessing the superior and master power by which all emotions are swayed, he succeeds in charming the listening ear, and in allaying self-interest and prejudice.

His habit in speaking is to hold his head rather more backward than erect. He prefers also to speak to an audience whose seats are graduated in height, rather than to have them on a level lower than himself. This position, no doubt, allows the free action of the organs of the voice.

He owes his oratorical success not to any one quality, but to a combination of qualities, like the light and shade of a picture. He speaks with a composed air, and unfolds his facts easily and yet correctly, exhibiting a thorough grasp of his subject matter. His narrative is excellent, and it is impossible to expose the details of a complicated subject more luminously. His speeches are models of clear and persuasive statements, and are cast in a single and symmetrical mould. They are eminent for their unlaboured clearness and compactness of reasoning, and for the noble and unaffected simplicity of their style. No affected brevity or terseness, still less of "linked dullness long drawn out." His speeches have force, fervour, passion, and grandeur, and touch the heart, the conscience, and the intellect.

His information on affairs is accurate and wide. There is a ripeness in his knowledge which bears witness that it is not forced for the occasion, but is the fruit of years. A memory which lets nothing escape that he has once considered, whether large in size or imperceptibly small, and a penetration that never leaves the point of his own case unexplored. He weighs things with the greatest impartiality, and comes to the most rational

conclusion. He repeats the lesson of experience, and displays things as they are. The turn of his intellect and the bent of his character are obviously practical, and he aims at the attainment of real good. His thoughts are always just, and somewhat novel ; but although generally he speaks with precision of words and compression of ideas which characterise a deep thinker, he expresses himself with that perspicuity which can only be attained from practice, and his poetical diction imparts warmth and brilliancy even to the coldest reasoning. His opinions have the authority of evidently proceeding from deep and settled principles. His utterances are never dry, and his fancy is lively enough to shed light upon the darkest subject, and to strew flowers and fruit round the most barren tracks of inquiry, and light it up with pleasantry. The extraordinary depth of his detached views, the penetrating sagacity which he occasionally applies to the affairs of men and their motives, and the curious felicity of expression with which he unfolds principles and traces resemblances and relations, are separately the gift of few, and in their union probably without any example. He speaks sometimes in tones of warning, and even suppressed menace ; but more often he appeals to reason. A want of speaking plainly has never been his fault. He has power of hard, stringent reasoning and cogent argument. He always concedes what is undeniable in fact and clear to an unprejudiced mind, not glossing it over or leaving it untouched. He never raises a cloud between himself and the truth, nor does he seek to blind his opponents, or bewilder them. Yet he can flit over his opponent's arguments as lightly as a sunbeam on the water, equally master of the jocular and serious, of the playful and severe. He can either bring his masses of information to bear directly upon the subject to which they severally belong, or he can turn any portion of them to account for the purpose of illustrating his theme. His views range over all the cognate subjects. His reasonings derived from principles applicable to other theories as well as the one in hand. Arguments pour in from all sides, which are the natural growth of the path he is leading his audience over ; while to throw light round their steps or to serve for their recreation, illustrations are fetched from different quarters ; and an imagination marvellously quick to detect unthought-of resemblances enables him to turn his information to the greatest use.

He is not sparing of the figures of rhetoric, yet when he uses them they are happily brought in. One of these felicitous figures occurred in his speech on Reform at a meeting at St. James's Hall, London, in 1866 :—

"These opponents of ours, many of them in Parliament openly, and many of them secretly in the press," said Mr. Bright, "have charged us with being the promoters of a dangerous excitement. They say we are the source of the danger which threatens; they have absolutely the effrontery to charge me with being the friend of public disorder. I am one of the people. Surely, if there be one thing in a free country more clear than another, it is that any one of the people may speak openly to the people. If I speak to the people of their rights, and indicate to them the way to secure them—if I speak of their danger to the monopolists of power—am I not a wise counsellor, both to the people and to their rulers? Suppose I stood at the foot of Vesuvius or Etna, and, seeing a hamlet or homestead planted on its slope, I said to the dwellers in that hamlet or in that homestead, 'You see that vapour which ascends from the summit of the mountain—that vapour may become a dense, black smoke that will obscure the sky. You see that trickling of lava from the crevices or fissures in the side of the mountain—that trickling of lava may become a river of fire. You hear that muttering in the bowels of the mountain—that muttering may become a bellowing thunder, the voice of a violent convulsion that may shake half a continent. You know that at your feet is the grave of great cities for which there is no resurrection, as history tells us that dynasties and aristocracies have passed away, and their name has been known no more for ever.' If I say this to the dwellers upon the slope of the mountain, and if there comes hereafter a catastrophe which makes the world to shudder, am I responsible for that catastrophe? I did not build the mountain, or fill it with explosive materials. I merely warned the men that they were in danger. So, now, it is not I who am stimulating men to the violent pursuit of their acknowledged constitutional rights. We are merely about our lawful business; and you are the citizens of a country that calls itself free, yet you are citizens to whom is denied the greatest and the first blessing of the constitution under which you live. If the truth must be told, the Tory party is the turbulent party of this nation."

While Mr. Bright was delivering this beautiful passage there was a deep stillness, and when the pause came the audience, moved by an irresistible and unanimous impulse, sprang to their feet, and greeted the orator with rounds of deafening cheers.

His main weapons of attack are invective, irony, sarcasm, simile, drawn out to allegory, allusion, quotation, fable, and parable. A fine poetic vein runs through numberless passages of his speeches, and his hearers often feel the impression of true poetry; in fact his greatest speeches not unfrequently appear like a poem. If there be cold ascetics in the world who scout everything that a line cannot measure and a diagram demonstrate, still there are others left who can appreciate the mighty visions of the imagination. The best relation of facts accurately given in cold narrative would not do half as much in any good cause as when embellished by the graces of style and eloquence, which touch the passions and affect men to noble exertion for the benefit of mankind. Ideal goodness must be contemplated if we would avoid retrograding. A route as trackless as the eagle's must be followed to keep hope alive. Mr. Bright possesses the great materials of poetry, and preserves an ascendant tone of inspiration through all his speeches, yet he does not always speak in the same character of style. His passion for poetry is lofty and pure, and often he weaves beautiful couplets

into the texture of his speeches. In description he can hardly be surpassed, for he has all the qualities that conduce to it—ardour of purpose, vivid but not too luxuriant fancy, clear conception, and the faculty of shedding over mere inanimate scenery the glow imparted by moral association. His charming pictures represent all objects with so much truth, and his choice expressions are so perfect, that “fair trains of imagery before us rise,” and as we listen we seem to hear a voice touched to ærial sweetness, like soft music over a tract of waters, or feel to breathe the air of the mountain, or witness the panorama of the valley, or inhale the perfume of flowers; or he can portray with truthful vividness the wretched condition of the suffering poor.

The prevailing characteristic of his oratory is pathos, which sometimes deepens into touching melancholy, and he can, with apparently little effort, move his audience to tears. It is like music wakening slumbering memory by some welcome string, or the mind soaring o’er departed scenes with outstretched wing, and fascinatingly recalling incidents of nearly forgotten years. As an illustration of this we may mention that in the month of August, 1877, he delivered a masterly speech at Bradford on the life of his departed friend, Richard Cobden. He spoke as if inspired, and the minds of the audience could not help wandering to that peaceful sweet spot in West Lavington churchyard, where Cobden is interred.

“Methinks I hear his voice! sweet as the breath
Of balmy ground flowers, stealing from a spot
Of sunshine sacred
To everlasting spring”

“Well, it was at that time that I was at Leamington,” said Mr. Bright, “and one day Mr. Cobden called upon me, for he happened to be there also on a visit to some relatives. I was there in the depth of grief, and I might almost say of despair, for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life, and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, ‘There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Now, when the first paroxysm of your grief is passed, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest until the Corn Law is repealed.’ (Cheers.) I accepted his invitation.” (Cheers.)

The effect of this beautiful passage, “immortal in its tenderness,” touched the hearts of every one present, and even the reporters, who by usage manage in most cases to keep their sympathetic feelings under complete control, vainly tried to refrain from shedding tears. These strong impressions cannot be conveyed to the minds of others, except when the mind pro-

ducing them is instinct with truth and nature. It is feeling alone that electrifies an audience. It is true that the original master-touches that go to the heart must come from it.

“Some chord in unison with what we hear
Is touched within us; and the heart replies.”

“On this point I wish to refer to a letter which I received a few days ago from a most esteemed citizen of Dublin,” remarked Mr. Bright in one of his speeches in Ireland. “He told me that he believed that a very large portion of what he called the poor, amongst Irishmen, sympathised with any scheme or any proposition that was adverse to the Imperial Government. He said further, that the people here are rather in the country than of it, and that they are looking more to America than they are looking to England. I think there is a good deal in that. When we consider how many Irishmen have found a refuge in America, I do not know how we can wonder at that statement. You will recollect that when the ancient Hebrew prophet prayed in his captivity he prayed with his window opened towards Jerusalem. You know that the followers of Mohammed, when they pray, turn their faces towards Mecca. When the Irish peasant asks for food, and freedom, and blessing, his eye follows the setting sun; the aspirations of his heart reach beyond the wide Atlantic, and in spirit he grasps hands with the great Republic of the West.”

With the hearts and ears of his audience at his command, Mr. Bright can as easily excite another chord of feeling. With a slight touch of sarcasm he can arouse ridicule or indignation, and scathe the object of his scorn more terribly than by the bitterest or most violent invective. He is most exquisite in his tone of irony, and by a mere inflection of his voice he can express the intensest scorn, which would take some time to explain in words.

Another phase of oratory for which he is noted is his humour, but it is not used merely for the sake of amusing. It is peculiarly his own, varied, always agreeable, and seldom severe; it is lively, playful, and directed to ridicule rather than lacerate. He confuses rather than wounds his opponent unless he chooses to be strongly sarcastic. Many of them are home thrusts, and the members of the House of Commons, to do them justice, are always obliged to any one who by smart humour amuses them. His mirth is always tempered with sensibility, and is of that kind which is built, not on a paucity, but upon a superabundance, of feeling. It is a droll, quiet, cutting, and sarcastic style, but never coarse; and while he delivers his sparkling *bon mot*, which make his audience roar with laughter, and while

“All around
Catch the contagion, and return the sound—
Convulsive mirth on every cheek appears,”

he seems the least affected by it, so perfect is his self-control. When he is contemplating an amusing passage, there is no indication in his manner of what is approaching, but a close

observer would notice a pleasant agitation in the neighbourhood of his eye.

His power in comic description is remarkable. It is not like painting a picture, but unrolling it. Sometimes a sentence or two, aided by the quaintness of the style, flashes a whole picture at once on the view.

"I recollect a little time ago," related Mr. Bright in the House of Commons, "a gentleman writing about the serious things which had happened in his time, and he said, amongst other things, that there was a man down in the same country—I don't know whether it was in Buckinghamshire or where it was—(laughter)—and the man was not a Cabinet Minister, he was only a mountebank—(renewed laughter)—but he set up a stall and offered to the country people to sell them pills that were very good against earthquakes." (Roars of laughter.)

Again, when referring to Lord Derby's professions about Reform in 1858, he said :—

"It would be like the sort of feast that a Spanish host sets before his guests, consisting of little meat and a great deal of table-cloth."

Another is the joke about the Syrian monks, to whom "tears were as natural as perspiration." Then there was the sarcasm hidden in the parenthetical remark about the gentleman's ancestors who came over with the Conqueror—"I never heard that they did anything else."

He once described Mr. Disraeli as "the mystery man of the Tory Party." Speaking of the Conservative Leader, he said :—

"If they had been in the wilderness he would have complained of the Ten Commandments as a harassing piece of legislation."

During the American war an attempt was made to keep some of the mill hands partially employed by the use of Indian cotton, known as "Surat," which was the most difficult and troublesome to work. Mr. Bright related that on one Sunday morning a minister was praying that merciful Heaven would grant a plentiful supply of cotton, when a man in the congregation, a cotton spinner, cried out—"Yes, Lord, but not Surat."

Another instance is the story of the old gentleman who used to say that "a hole would last longer than a patch."

In a speech on Reform, Mr. Bright remarked :—

"For, after all, the Bill of the last session, honest and well intended and valuable as it was, was still but a tinkering of a very bad system. But the Tory party refused even to have it tinkered. They remind me very much of a wealthy but a most penurious old gentleman, who lived some years ago in my neighbourhood, and who objected, amongst other expenses, very much to a tailor's bill, and he said he had found out that a hole would last longer than a patch. I am not sure that this is not the case with Lord Derby and his friends; for it was one of their great arguments that if the Bill of the Government passed, it would inevitably follow that something more would almost immediately be demanded."

Mr. Gladstone, in relating for this biography an anecdote, states:—

"I remember an expression of Mr. Bright's about Mr. Cobden. There was a discussion of some Church matter in the House of Commons. Some one pleading with Mr. Bright said that Cobden was favourable to the Church view of it. 'Oh, yes,' said he, 'Cobden is turned Puseyite.' I need hardly say he did not mean this to be taken literally."

Sir R. Peel, when he was Irish Secretary, extolled the "gentlemen" of South America during the civil war, and demanded the recognition of the South, and bitterly attacked the North. In a debate in the House of Commons Mr. Bright said:—

"The other day, not a week since, a member of the present Government—he is not a statesman, he is the son of a great statesman, and occupies the position of the Secretary for Ireland—dared to say to an English audience that he wished the Republic to be divided, and that the South should become an independent State. If that Island which, I suppose, in punishment for some of its offences has been committed to his care—if that Island were to attempt to secede, not to set up a slave kingdom but a kingdom more free than it has ever been, the Government of which he is a member would sack its cities and drench its soil with blood before they would allow such a kingdom to be established."

The following are specimens of his wit:—

"Gentlemen will consent to be made the instrument to reimpose upon the country the excise duties which have been repealed, or the import duties which in past times inflicted such enormous injury upon trade," said Mr. Bright in his speech in March, 1854. "The property-tax is the lever, or the weapon, with which the proprietors of lands and houses in this kingdom will have to support the 'integrity and independence' of the Ottoman Empire. Gentlemen, I congratulate you, that every man of you has a Turk upon his shoulders."

"There is a curious affinity between the Turkish language and our own which I noticed," remarked Mr. Bright in 1854. "You observed there was an *emeute*—a disturbance in Constantinople a while ago. A great number of people made a disturbance, and were very anxious to go to war, and to force the Government to war, and not treat at all according to the recommendations of the ambassadors; and the Sultan, it is said, determined that half of them should join the army in Roumelia, and the other half should go to the fleet. Well, that class of persons were called '*Softas*'—(laughter)—in English (and here is the remarkable affinity between the two languages) we merely call them *softys*. (Laughter.) Now I have not the least objection, I confess, that our foreign enlistment act should be suspended—that every man who feels a burning—I don't exactly know what to call it—something that on subjects of this kind I never felt myself—but every man who has a burning desire to be avenged upon Russia, or some high mission to save Turkey, I should like him to be at perfect liberty to go. (Laughter and cheers.) Now in all the enthusiasm that I have heard of, I have not met with a single man who offers to go." (Laughter.)

"A great many people in this country," said Mr. Bright, in speaking on 'Fair-trade'—"I hope a diminishing number—think that because other countries do not allow us to send our goods into their markets free of duty, therefore we should not allow them to send their goods to this market free of duty. They think that two bad things are better than one. They remind me very much of what it would be if a man had got a sound box on the side of his head, and he was to go about complaining that nobody gave him another sound box on the other side."

"One of the candidates for the inferior position of minority member for Birmingham," said Mr. Bright in November, 1868, "complained on a recent occasion that I had not read the speeches of his colleague in the candidature, and that I had not, in duty bound, undertaken to answer him. The fact is, I am too busy in these days to dwell very much on works of fiction. The speeches of Mr. Lloyd are what I call dull fiction, and the speeches of his colleague, though not less fiction, are certainly of a rather more sparkling and sensational character."

"There was a dear old friend of mine, the late Colonel Perronet Thompson," related Mr. Bright, "who once said to me when there had been some talk somewhere of a revolt of troops, that it is a very dangerous thing when the extinguisher takes fire. He thought there was not much chance of the conflagration being put out."

"By-the-by, the valour of the yeomanry has never been more conspicuous," said Mr. Bright, in a speech in July, 1844; "it was once proposed, in an Act which was passed to raise a troop of yeomanry, that they should never be allowed to go out of the country, except in the case of an invasion."

His rising in the House of Commons is always an event. There is a difference between his two styles of oratory as displayed inside and outside the walls of Parliament. He is more argumentative in the House, whereas at public meetings he indulges in a more eloquent style of speaking. In premeditated speeches he is great and convincing, and is always ready to take part in any debate that may suddenly arise in the House. In the course of the discussion he is constantly on the alert to detect salient points, in order that he may either contradict or eulogise them, and with the matter thus collected he is able to deliver an admirable speech. Before he rises to address the Houses, he has been noticed, as previous speakers were proceeding, to write short notes with a pencil on a piece of paper. He shows signs of nervousness by a restlessness on his seat, crossing his legs, smoothing his hair, but as soon as he has risen he appears cool and collected. He is greeted with a sudden cheer, and in an instant there is a hush, except a slight bustle caused by the rush of members to their seats. The absent in the library and tea-room are suddenly apprised "that Bright is up," and there is a general exodus for the House, and in less than five minutes every seat is filled. No wonder that those who have once heard that clear and powerful voice, beheld that manly figure and those unaffected but imposing attitudes, who have seen the lightning of his eye, and been borne along by the majestic flow of his distinctly articulated words, will be the first to seize an opportunity of enjoying the treat again. His great ally, Mr. Gladstone, has described him as "the man whose voice the House loves to hear." His name is worthily associated with the names of Chatham, Burke, Fox, and Gladstone. Edmund Burke's oratory was chivalrous and classic, while Bright's is distinguished by a noble simplicity, unbroken chain of reasoning, illumined by flashes of wit, humour, and grand imagery. If he is interrupted while speaking, he promptly replies in such a manner as to show that he thoroughly understands his argument, and is not to be diverted from it by any interference whatever, the result being that his opponent is utterly discomfited. Mr. Bright then coolly resumes the thread of his discourse and proceeds with his argu-

ment. He can put the most difficult question clearly before his audience, for his words are plain and his meaning transparent, and the driest subject under his management becomes interesting. In every part of his speech the most just and constitutional principles of policy are enforced, and he throughout displays that curious felicity, which, in its application to the mere concern of diction, is an exquisite accomplishment, but which, when directed to the more important task of selecting, arranging, and mutually harmonising the topics and arguments belonging to the whole subject, rises into the very highest sphere of oratorical excellence. Sometimes it is his custom to direct his address more particularly to his opponents in politics who are before him, and his eye ranges calmly along their ranks, and he speaks to them almost individually. The book of experience, the lessons of history he points out, are to them a sealed volume; that with unvarying obstinacy they rejected its dictates, spurned its precepts, and disregarded its warnings. He reminds them that he has been right on all the great questions of the last quarter of a century, and forcibly puts the question whether it is not possible that he is right also on the subject under discussion, and that they, Proteus-like, would again shift their ground. The ready "No, no," escapes the lips of his opponents, but Mr. Bright, nothing daunted, pursues his course and manfully proves his position. He analyses the Conservatives with the greatest freedom, reminding them with a bitterly emphasised "you, at such a time, did this, in such circumstances you did that, at the present time, if we would let you, you would do anything equally bad." Preserving the most perfect self-possession, he summons up modern English history as a record of progress, points out the decayed monuments of error, and the wonderfully long list of triumphs are all clearly enumerated, and he shows that past opinions, advocated by himself, which they had at first strenuously resisted, had ultimately been adopted by his political opponents, and converted into Acts of Parliament; that these measures they now tried to claim as their own, and that their leader had deceived them with the tinsel of language, as they could not discern the sterling ore of thought. There is no disputing the fact that the great measures of the last forty years are to a considerable degree connected with his name, and that whatever development of opinion years have made, there has been no departure from the principles avowed at the beginning, and his opponents are further aware that he never changes his opinions after they have been maturely formed; further, that his political sagacity and forethought have been even more re-

markable than his accomplishments, and there is no denying that his triumphs have placed him foremost among the statesmen of the age. Men have no distrust of the ground which feels solid under their feet. They also follow a leader who not only gains triumphs, but never vacillates in his strategy.

"My conscience tells me that I have laboured honestly only to destroy that which is evil and to build up that which is good," he reminded the House on one occasion, adding: "The political gains of the last twenty-five years, as they were summed up the other night by the hon. member for Wick, are my political gains, if they can be called the gains in any degree of any living Englishman. And if now, in all the great centres of our population—in Birmingham with its busy district, in Manchester with its encircling towns, in the population of the West Riding of Yorkshire, in Glasgow, and amidst the vast industries of the West of Scotland, and in this great Babylon in which we are assembled—if we do not find ourselves surrounded by hungry and exasperated multitudes; if now more than at any time during the last hundred years it may be said, quoting the beautiful words of Mr. Sheridan, 'Content sits basking on the cheeks of toil'; if this House and its statesmen glory in the change, have not I as much as any living man some claim to partake of that glory?"

Many statesmen and many writers may justly share with him in such glory, but Bright, Cobden, and Gladstone, have performed the greatest share in the noble work. It has been the ambition of Mr. Bright's life that England may long be pointed out as the abode of tranquillity, freedom, industry, free trade, and rational enjoyment; that its inhabitants may be adorned with every great and good qualification, and made the chosen instruments for the support and diffusion of truth, justice, and religion. Distinctions such as these, he has confidence, would add lustre to our days of glory, and that the preservation of them would be the surest means to arrest or avert the hour of our decline.

In these discussions he carefully upholds the dignity of debate, and looks at the questions honestly on all sides. Party has not blinded his judgment, his attention having been directed more to class than to party questions. He is particularly careful not to speak on subjects he has not thoroughly mastered; and his speeches are founded on a solid substratum of hard facts, embellished by the flowers of rhetoric. His opinions have been received as always resulting from general principles deliberately applied to each emergency; and they have been looked upon as forming a connected system of doctrines, by which his own sentiments and conduct were regulated, and from which after times may derive the lessons of practical wisdom.

With such a rare combination of qualities he can safely use imagery which few other members of the House dare to employ. In pathos he stands positively pre-eminent, and no member dare venture with impunity to touch such a chord except a master of

the art. Bright has heart as well as brain, and the House yields itself to his spell, and in softened accents and with inexpressible tenderness he appeals to the conscience of men of all parties, and he touches, amidst the most hushed silence, the tenderest chords of the human heart. At such times his earnestness is overpowering, and no one can listen to him wholly unmoved ; and no matter how a hearer may dissent from every opinion he maintains, it is yet impossible not to yield some tribute of admiration.

He almost seems to foresee the future results of current events. He, like the seers of old, and with the gift of genius approaching to the powers of divination, and the prophetic soul of Daniel, launches out into the sea of futurity, brings home from the remotest shores spoils of which we are only yet learning the value and meaning, and delights in announcing that the day of light and liberty is approaching. He opens to the admiring gaze of his hearers a flood of riches, those better riches which grow naturally upon the earth's surface, and not the fictitious wealth which is derived from war. History, however, is his guide, for he believes that "the best prophet of the future is the past," and that "certain signs precede certain events ;" and the best of it is there has been a realisation of these prophecies once derided, and the acceptance of proposals once despised. The words he uttered in 1862, when the future of the North was at its darkest in the great American struggle, were an illustration :—

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone) as a speaker is not surpassed by any man in England, and he is a great statesman ; he believes the cause of the North to be hopeless, and that their enterprise cannot succeed," said Mr. Bright. . . . "I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main ; and I see one people and one language, and one law and one faith, and over all that wide continent the home of freedom and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime."

The uniform care he bestows on the perorations, which are brief and powerful, and given with breadth, depth, and solemnity, adds greatly to the impressiveness of his speeches. They sweep along, gathering grandeur as they rise beautifully to a climax. The tide of clear, strong English rolls on, evincing more beauty as it proceeds, period after period of exalted and swelling thought, with the cumulative power of wave on wave, until the tone rises to a sonorous and majestic height to fall in a solemn cadence, even as the uttermost billow lifts its weight of crested thunder to break and die along the shore. The hearer is spell-bound and filled with admiration, and the

huzzas generally are of the most enthusiastic kind, and taken up again and again, and are by no means confined to one side of the House, for the Conservatives, however little they might agree with his speeches, are not so ungenerous as to refuse the tribute to the singular oratorical powers which he displays.

Speeches, when transposed through the cold medium of the Press, inevitably suffer from the loss of the inspiration and energy of the speaker, from the absence of the immediate action of the mind upon mind, from the want of the inexpressible touching tones of his voice and the sympathetic flow of the emotions that agitate a great assembly. The united effect of his speaking is now attractive, now touching, now pleasing, now fearful, sometimes crushing, and occasionally enrapturing. All these effects evaporate to a great extent in the transcript, although every word is faithfully recorded. The difference between his spoken and published speeches is the difference between the House of Commons in daylight laid open to the studious contemplation of a solitary visitant, and the same edifice beheld lighted up, when thronged by excited members listening in breathless silence to majestic eloquence, which is occasionally interrupted by bursts of cheering. Still, the intellectual eye will find in reading his speeches that they are high models of rhetorical composition, and, as specimens of popular English declamation, his efforts rank high; and, as they float on the bosom of time, they will delight, and carry the riches of the English language wherever they flow.

"I believe that ignorance and suffering might be lessened to an incalculable extent, and that many an Eden, beauteous in flowers and rich in fruits, might be raised up in the waste wilderness which spreads before us," said Mr. Bright in a peroration on Reform at Glasgow. "But no class can do that. The class which has hitherto ruled in this country has failed miserably. It revels in power and wealth, whilst at its feet, a terrible peril for its future, lies the multitude which it has neglected. If a class has failed, let us try the nation. (Great cheering.) That is our faith, that is our purpose, that is our cry—Let us try the nation. (Renewed cheering.) This it is which has called together these countless numbers of the people to demand a change; and, as I think of it, and of these gatherings, sublime in their vastness and in their resolution, I think I see, as it were, above the hill-tops of time, the glimmerings of the dawn of a better and a nobler day for the country and for the people that I love so well." (Enthusiastic cheering.)

"It is a fact," said Mr. Bright in concluding his speech at Birmingham in 1870, "that no Government, that no Administration, that no laws, and that no amount of industry or commerce, that no extent of freedom can give prosperity and solid comfort in the homes of the people, unless there be in those homes economy, temperance, and the practice of virtue. This is needful for all; but it is especially needful, most needful in some respects, for those whose possessions are the least abundant and the least secured. If we could subtract from the ignorance, the poverty, the suffering, the sickness, and the crime which are now witnessed amongst us, the ignorance, the poverty, the suffering, the sickness, and the crime which are caused by the single, but the most prevalent, habit or vice of drinking needlessly, which destroys the body and mind and home and family, do we not all feel that this country would be so changed, and so changed for the better, that it would almost be impossible for us to know it again? Let me, then, in conclusion say what is upon my heart to say, what I know to be true,

what I have felt every hour of my life when I have been discussing great questions affecting the condition of the working classes—let me say this to all the people: that it is by a combination of a wise Government and a virtuous people, and not otherwise, that we may hope to make some steps towards that blessed time when there shall be no longer complaining in our streets, and when our garnerers shall be full, affording all manner of store.”

“These men are in error who tell you that nothing has been done, and that all remains to be done,” said Mr. Bright at Birmingham in October, 1873, adding: “those men are not less in error who tell you that what has been done is evil, and that it is evil to do anything more. What you should do is to act upon the principles and the rules of past years, steadily advancing in favour of questions which the public has thoroughly discussed, which it thoroughly comprehends, and which Parliament can honestly put into law. For my part, looking back over these forty years, I feel some little sense of content. But it does not in the least degree lessen, on the contrary, it rather adds to and strengthens, my hope for the future. The history of the last forty years of this country, judged fairly—I speak of its legislation—is mainly a history of the conquests of freedom. It will be a grand volume that tells the story, and your name and mine, if I mistake not, will be found in some of its pages. (Cheers.) For me, the final chapter is now writing. It may be already written; but for you, this great constituency, you have a perpetual youth and a perpetual future. I pray Heaven that in years to come, when my voice is hushed, you may be granted strength, and moderation, and wisdom, to influence the councils of your country by righteous means for none other than noble and righteous ends.” (Cheers.)

“The fact is the world, as we are in it but for a very short time, does not seem to go on very fast, and we must be satisfied if we can only move it a little,” remarked Mr. Bright, in speaking on Free-trade and the prevention of wars, in Bradford, on the 25th of July, 1877: “but the interests of all mankind are so bound up in this question that it only wants that you should dispel the sort of fog which intercepts their vision, when they would come at once to see a promised land which was within their reach, and a fruit which they have never tasted within their grasp, and if this view could once be opened up to the intelligent people in these countries, I have a confident belief that the time will come, that it must come, when these vast evils shall be suppressed, and men shall not learn war any more, and God’s earth shall not be made, as it is, a charnel house by the constant murder of hundreds of thousands of His creatures.”

“I am a plain and simple citizen, sent here by one of the foremost constituencies of the Empire,” said Mr. Bright in concluding a speech in the House of Commons in December, 1854, against the war with Russia, “representing feebly, perhaps, but honestly, I dare aver, the opinions of very many, and the true interests of all those who have sent me here. Let it not be said that I am alone in my condemnation of this war, and of this incapable and guilty Administration. And even if I were alone, if mine was a solitary voice, raised amid the din of arms and clamours of a venal press, I should have the consolation I have to-night—and which I trust will be mine to the last moment of my existence—the priceless consolation that no word of mine has tended to promote the squandering of my country’s treasure or the spilling of one single drop of my country’s blood.”

“But let me add, that this which you have erected to-day,” said Mr. Bright when performing the ceremony of unveiling the statue of Richard Cobden at Bradford on the 25th of July, 1877, “which is erected in your midst, is by no means the greatest monument that has been built up to him. There is one far grander and of wider significance. There is not in the country a homestead in which there is not added comfort from his labours, not a cottage the dwellers in which have not steadier employment, higher wages, and a more solid independence. This is his enduring monument. He worked for these ends, and for these great purposes, and he worked even almost to the very day when the lamp of light went out. He is gone; but his character, his deeds, his life, his example, remains a possession to his countrymen. And let this be said of him for generations to come, as long as the great men of England are spoken of in the English language; let it be said of him that Richard Cobden gave the labours of a life that he might confer upon his countrymen perfect freedom of industry, and with it not that blessing only, but its attendant blessings of plenty and of peace.”

When Mr. Bright has finished his speech and sat down, he impresses his audience with the idea that he has by no means exhausted his subject, but that he could, if he had pleased, have said a great deal more and equally effective. His audience feel the sense of the fulness of his knowledge on the great subjects, and are confident of the exactness of his facts, and that his views are perfectly clear and defined. There are very few topics, whether of home or foreign policy, on which he has not expressed his opinion; yet, after so many years of public speaking, he admitted a short time ago that he was always happier the morning after a meeting than before it, showing that even with all his practice he, in common with other great orators, suffers slightly from nervousness.

So exclusively does he express himself in vigorous Saxon that a word of Greek, Latin, or French is rarely heard from him. It is a stream of pure unadulterated English, flowing copiously. Still, though the texture of his language is homely Saxon, sometimes he resorts to the Latin element of our composite tongue. "The *august* mother of free nations" is one instance in which he used a word of Latin origin, which gave grandeur to the sentence. He is often cited as an example of the uselessness of studying the dead languages. He is a master of the art of investing plain facts and statistics with interest. This he does by comparisons, by which he not only rivets the attention of his audience, but makes his statement perfectly plain to the simplest intelligence.

For a long period he has stored his mind with treasures of the English poets as well as the classics of other countries, and his attention has been absorbed in the finest imagery, fables, and comparisons. His quotations have been chiefly from the Bible, Dante, Chaucer, Milton, Shakspeare, Byron, Wordsworth, Southey, and other poets congenial to his cast of mind. He, amongst other things, studied the objects which these poets sought. Chaucer, the father of English poetry, he observed, painted the manners of his age; Shakspeare mirrored humanity; Milton vindicated the ways of God; Wordsworth showed the poetry and divinity that are in grass and weeds—the thoughts too deep for tears enfolded in the meanest flower; Byron dashed defiance in the face of man and God; Shelley sincerely sought in his own wild, impracticable way to elevate his species; Crabbe pleaded, like himself, the cause of the poor by photographing their manners; and Southey taught a Christian morality through the medium of the gigantic myths of India and Arabia.

For years, while studying the poets, it has also been Mr.

Bright's practice to write select quotations in a small book. These extracts are remarkable for point, polish, and for pathetic beauty, and in addition he has a fine taste for other descriptions of literature. There is much of the old Puritan about him. If he does not, like the old Puritan, often quote the language of scripture, he has almost always in his finest passages, like pleasing anthems, some reference to a Bible phrase, and a fine vein of righteousness runs through some of his arguments.

When he rises to speak it is because he has something worth listening to, not because he wishes to display oratorical power; and his remarks are made in a clear, business style. One of his characteristics is that of quiet strength, giving the impression of great power. He was the first to approach subjects of public interest in a fair and impartial spirit. There is an absence of personalities in his speeches. If he refers to public men, he does so simply because of the utterances they have made in a public capacity. He is seen at his best when he is attacking that which he thinks is an abuse, and then his remarks are very crushing, and are calculated to confound the sophistical. When he is explaining how a measure might be improved and accepted for what it is worth, he is interesting, and in both capacities it is the critical element of his character that comes into play. Iconoclastic he certainly is, but his object is to improve upon that which exists. There is no attempt to evade the difficulties of a question, but he will even exhibit them in all their naked literalness, and wrestle with them as an intellectual athlete, "for the brave man never despairs." When, then, such a one is free to exercise his own faculties, he creates, forms, quickens, organises, blessing what he produces by communicating to it the essential qualities of his own life. The measures he advocated were no wild experiments, but the measures of a master mind, for directing in the best channels the energies of the people. They were all connected with the public benefit, which was the result of sound judgment and superior comprehension. He has taken up large questions, and dealt with them in a way that was not without a greatness of its own. His fame is connected with every interest of his country, whether in domestic or foreign policy, and he has stamped on his age the genius of his character. He has bravely striven for right and justice with an honesty which is partly the result of his domestic training, and partly the gift of nature. He avowed his opinions openly and unreservedly. If statesmanship consists in wide and varied political knowledge, in the firm grasp and intelligent exposition of great principles, in the possession and proclamation of advanced

convictions, which, though unpopular at first, have passed at length into the public opinion of the nation, then Mr. Bright has established his claim to stand in the front rank of modern statesmen.

His life has been consistent throughout, and very few statesmen can look back with such unmingled satisfaction on the work he has done for the good of his country. Far as he yet is from having carried the whole of his ideas fully into effect, he knows that every past year has chronicled some step in advance. The past thus becomes the pledge of the future, and he can allow his opinions to unfold themselves naturally and gradually. His penetration led him to fling behind him the prejudices of the past, and steer his course by the light of better principles. He has left a triumphant and brilliant example for his successors to follow, and England will inscribe his among the lofty intellects and famous names that will figure in the scroll of her prouder history. Numberless students will linger over his speeches of majestic march of reason and modulated music of expression long after the resonant tones which gave them their final charm have sunk into the silence which awaits all human voices.

There are other members of Parliament who can speak good English, and turn neat periods, and strike off smart antitheses, who are yet not very influential in the promotion of public opinion, and their public addresses do not usually make any great impression. Mr. Bright, on the other hand, is sure to have all England for his audience, and is invariably reported in the first person, and this is the result not only of his eloquence but even more of the honesty of his purpose and the plain-spoken truth of his politics. There are more who read and reflect now than ever; there are fewer now who will take the *ipse dixit* of another upon any subject of importance without thinking something about it themselves. They form silently their judgment from the conflicting parties, and often set right those who are ostensibly their preceptors. No fact in history is more striking than the indifference with which even the lives of common men were formerly regarded; but now they, and all other classes and bodies of men, have become better acquainted with their own power, and are daily pressing forward to better times.

Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright were admirable counterparts of each other, and invariably worked in unison. Their usual custom was for Mr. Cobden to speak first, grappling with the financial and economic aspects of the subject. In due course Mr. Bright would rise, after other members had expressed their

opinions, and would truly tear to shreds the flimsy arguments of those opponents by his irresistible persuasiveness and a strong battery of facts. The Right Hon. W. E. Forster, M.P., during the earlier part of 1877, related a circumstance that came under his own observation. He said :—

“I remember very well talking to Mr. Cobden about some debate in which he took a great interest. Mr. Cobden said, ‘I don’t know how I shall get on, for I am afraid Bright will not be there.’ I replied, ‘I should have thought you could have done very well without him.’ He said, ‘No, I am always used to acting with him. I begin, but he always comes in at the end, and I know that whoever attacks me in the course of the debate always gets the worst of it.’”

Cobden gave the prose of eloquence and Bright the poetry, as well as wit and metaphor. Cobden’s style was his own, and in it he had no equal in the House of Commons. He at once won the attention of audiences, for he only sought to deal with facts and arguments. He never spoke without maturing what he had to say; not in the way of elaboration, but in the way of turning the subject over and over in his own mind, and in considering, as he phrased it, “the best way of putting it.”

As a rule, Cobden did not indulge in sarcasm, especially in the House of Commons, where he thought all should be serious and earnest. Yet he could do a little of the scathing when he chose, as was evident from his vigorous speeches delivered at various times during the French-invasion panics, in one of which, at Edinburgh, he turned the tables on our friend *Punch* with capital effect. *Punch* had displayed Cobden in a cartoon, with the ears of an ass, looking into the muzzle of a cannon, and declaring that it was harmless; but the invasion fever at last subsided, and Cobden created “roars of laughter” by asking his audience, “Who has got the long ears and the fool’s cap now?” In his speeches he adapted himself to his audience, who felt quite at home with him, for he had the air of one arguing alone and familiarly with himself; and while he was speaking, they felt it almost impossible not to range themselves on his side. His unaffected good-nature, his natural pleasantry, were irresistible.

Cobden and Bright derived pleasure from the inspiration of their subjects and the good work they were conferring on the poor. They, like the sun and light, were diffusive and glad to see poverty—whether in friend or foreigner—relieved. They glanced over the busy world, detected error and mischief, and pointed out modes of improvement. The grandeur of their work was an argument with them not to stop short, but to proceed. They, like Arnault, although growing old, were not desirous to rest, for they had all eternity to rest in.

Mr. Bright, having received from a student in a Non-conformist college a letter asking his opinion on the art of public speaking and on reading sermons, returned the following answer:—

“You ask me two questions, to one of which I can give a ready answer. I have never been in the habit of writing out my speeches; certainly not for more than thirty years past. The labour of writing is bad enough, and the labour of committing to memory would be intolerable; and speeches ‘read’ to a meeting are not likely to be received with much favour. It is enough to think over what is to be said, and to form an outline in a few brief notes. But first of all, a real knowledge of the subject to be spoken of is required; with that, practice should make speaking easy. As to what is best for the pulpit I may not venture to say much. It would seem that rules applicable to other speaking will be equally applicable to the pulpit. But in a pulpit a man is expected to speak for a given time, on a great theme, and with less exact material than is obtainable on other occasions and on ordinary subjects. And further, a majority of preachers are not good speakers, and perhaps could not be made such. They have no natural gift for good speaking; they are not logical in mind; not full of ideas nor free of speech; and they have none of that natural readiness which is essential to a powerful and interesting speaker. It is possible, nay, perhaps very probable, that if reading sermons were abolished, while some sermons would be better than they now are, the majority of them would be simply chaos, and utterly unendurable to the most patient congregation. Given a man with knowledge of his subject and a gift for public speaking, then I think reading a mischief; but given a man who knows little and who has no gift of speaking, then reading seems to be inevitable, because speaking, as I deem it, is impossible. But it must be a terrible thing to have to read or speak a sermon every week on the same topic to the same people; terrible to the speaker and hardly less so to the hearers. Only men of great mind, great knowledge, and great power, can do this with great success. I wonder that any man can do it. I forbear, therefore, from giving a strong opinion on the point you submit to me. When a man can speak let him speak—it is, no doubt, most effective; but when a man cannot speak he must read. Is not this the sum of the whole matter?”

A few years ago Mr. E. Potter, M.P., informed the members of the Carlisle Debating Club, at one of their meetings, that he heard Mr. Bright say at a dinner party that:—

“The whole secret of effective speaking is here—of course, if you mean to speak, you first know what you are going to say; and when you have resolved on that, the next point is to speak very deliberately—every word, in fact every syllable, should be expressed.’ And Mr. Bright added, ‘If you do this, and if you have matter worth listening to, you will be listened to, and you will acquire a confidence and ease you won’t acquire in any other way.’ That he (Mr. Potter) thought good advice, and he was sorry they could not at all times attend to it, because one was sometimes in the habit of slurring over one’s speaking, under the idea that the audience were getting impatient.”

Mr. Gladstone has contributed the following incident to this biography:—“Mr. Bright was on a visit at Hawarden, when I was residing there under the roof of my brother-in-law, Sir C. J. Glynne, who had other guests, amongst them a distinguished Tory publisher and an archdeacon of the High Church school, a man universally respected and beloved. On the evening before his departure Mr. Bright and I went into a side room for a political conversation. When we returned these two guests had

retired to their rooms, and Mr. Bright was vexed at not having bid them farewell. Some one took notice of his remarks, and let them know. Presently they reappeared; the archdeacon had assumed his costume as a dignitary of the Church, and the publisher was extremely well got up in a comfortable winter dressing-gown. It was on all sides a pleasant exhibition of personal good feeling."

At a local pastime known as "Rushbearing" it is customary for children to carry from house to house garlands of pretty device to exhibit, and "One Ash" has always been a favourite place at which to display them. If Mr. Bright is not at home to admire them, and contribute his annual gift, some of his daughters, with his grandchildren, are generally present to witness the sight, and encourage the exhibition.

It is a fine Sunday in summer time. A ray of light from the east glimmers over the town of Rochdale, and with the progress of the sun's morning beams the inhabitants bestir themselves. The flying shuttle rests, for the labouring loom is still; "the anvil's din has ceased;" the dizzy rounds of the whirling stone is stopped; the roll of heavily-laden carts is no longer heard, for the stiff, unwieldy steed lies in the green pastures. The air is free from the factory smoke; the waves of worldly business are calmed; and the soft green meadows and their upland glade are peaceful. The mountains surrounding Rochdale throw their shadows on the emerald fields at their base; a graver murmur gurgles from the rills; "the gales that lately sighed along the groves have hushed their downy wings in dead repose;" bright butterflies float gaily along the refreshing fields; skylarks, linnets, and thrushes warble in tones less shrill; the merry peal of church bells faintly sweeps over the distant landscape, imparting a feeling of gladness and dreamy peacefulness; the clouds forget to move; "the rooks float by in silent, airy drove." There is no clatter in the streets from the iron-bound clogs, for neatly-shaped shoes encircle the feet of the passer-by; the week-day shawl-begirt face is now crowned with a delicately-woven straw and choice sprays and wreaths of flowers, and nicely-fitting garments are donned. There is a general air of beautiful repose, and the people speak in subdued tones. It is a day of quiet domestic enjoyment, not saddened, but hallowed; for this day is the couch of time, and the Sabbath calm is round everywhere.

"See, through the streets that slumber in repose,
The living current of devotion flows—
Its varying forms, in one harmonious band,
Age leading childhood by its dimpled hand."

The elderly gentleman quietly walking down the street has made St. Stephen's re-echo again and again with his impressive eloquence. The place of worship to which his footsteps tend is the quiet unpretending little meeting-house of the Friends, situate in George Street, with its little trim grass-plot burial-ground in front, encircled by a high wall. It is a plain stone structure, without Corinthian beauty or Ionian grace, nor has it pillared lines with sculptured foliage crowned, nor is there contrition rolled forth from a majestic organ. There are no painted windows here to exclude the light; no old-fashioned pews, richly curtained and cushioned, where drowsy natures might indulge in balmy sleep; no rich-liveried servant clattering up the aisle to perform the essential offices of carrying one little prayer-book and shutting the door of his employer's pew, who professes to go to church to abjure all the pomps and vanities of this world. The interior and exterior of this edifice could not be plainer; yet there is an air of comfort in the cleanness and plainness of everything. A gallery extends across the back part of it, underneath which there are several rooms in which committee meetings are held. Along the side of the room most remote from the entrance-door is a raised platform, which is set apart for the various officers and ministers of the church, while for the use of the laity there are benches in the remainder of the room. Small indeed is the number of worshippers, yet there may be found amongst them representatives of every class and condition of life. Old and young, rich and poor, the heads of great manufacturing firms, and the humble workmen of various employments. Liberty, humanity, and spiritual religion, are deeply indebted to the members of the Society of Friends, who were persecuted in Old England by Royalist and by Puritan—persecuted in New England by the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers, with brutality which showed that those good men did not hesitate to copy in their turn, when in power, the harshness against which they had protested when it was exercised against themselves. The records of the early Quakers furnish stories of cruelty and constancy, of torture and endurance, as thrilling as any that can be found in the history of the Covenanters. This religious body has never defiled itself with slavery, and they have always been associated in the popular mind with philanthropy and benevolence.

“One's age should be tranquil, as one's childhood should be playful; hard work at either extremity of human existence seems to be out of place;” and Mr. Bright is conscious of the truthfulness of this aphorism, and having for over forty years worked hard for the benefit of his countrymen, he is now entitled

to more leisure, and, as he has remarked, he is now wishful to leave platform work for younger men. Yet after this life of toil he has still higher aspirations for a better system in State affairs; his ardent mind promises itself many gratifications in the fulfilment of plans which his superior sagacity has sketched out in earlier years, from the intellectual wealth with which he had stored his mind, and which he has improved by observation. He has stamped his image and superscription on all that was sound and solid in the policy of his day. He has always been in favour of providing plenty for the sustenance of the masses, and making them happy, rather than extending our dominions and increasing squalid poverty. There is no great work of statesmanship existing under whose foundations we should not find the coinage of Bright, Gladstone, and Richard Cobden. They have created for themselves in Acts of Parliament for the public good monuments more durable than marble or brass; and they deserve the hosannas of Englishmen, and the thanks of millions yet to be, for they have been the saviours of their country, have earned immortality, and indeed—

“ The earth has not
Nobler names than theirs.”

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MR. BRIGHT'S COURSE UPON IRISH LEGISLATION.

The Irish Question—"Breach of Privilege"—A Hopeful View of the Future of Ireland—The Extension of the Suffrage—Minority Representation—The Post-office and the Sabbath.

WHAT remains to be told of the life of Mr. Bright relates almost wholly to his course upon the Irish legislation proposed by Mr. Gladstone in 1885. This was the occasion of differences between the two "great commoners," bringing pain and regret to both, and perhaps it is not too much to say, shortening the declining years of one. Twice, before these differences arose, Mr. Bright was summoned to the House of Commons to meet a charge of breach of privilege in having spoken too severely of the action of certain members. Both charges were based on somewhat similar language. The first occasion was on June 18, 1883. Sir Stafford Northcote, with considerable heat, recited words used by Mr. Bright at Birmingham, to the effect that the Conservatives had been "found in alliance with the Irish Rebel party, the main portion of whose funds came from the avowed enemies of England, and whose oath of allegiance is broken by association with its enemies." Mr. Bright acknowledged the correctness of the report of his speech. He declared that, in the sense in which he used them, they were true, and for the purpose for which he used them, they were justifiable. There was, of course, a meaning of the word "alliance" that could not properly be applied to the facts. He had not used it in that meaning, and it was not necessarily to be drawn from the context. If his friends on the other side wished an illustration of the meaning he had intended to convey, they had only to refresh their memories by reference to their own remarks on what they had been pleased to call the "treaty of Kilmainham." If he had committed a breach of privileges, it was for the House to decide. Mr. T. P. O'Connor followed with a rasping speech, of which Mr. Bright took no notice. Mr. Gladstone, with his customary skill, turned the debate upon what was really the essential point of the charge, namely, upon whether the words were, by precedent and the custom of the House, a breach of privilege, and maintained that they were not. A motion was made and rejected, to dismiss the original motion, and then Sir S. Northcote's motion was put and lost by a vote of 117 for and 151 against it.

The next occasion of the kind was two years later, in July,

1885. It is worth while, perhaps, to cite it out of its order in point of time, to show the consistency of Mr. Bright's attitude. At what was known as the "Lord Spencer banquet," Mr. Bright had made a very earnest speech, in which he again alluded to the Irish members as "the Rebel party," and again charged them with approving violence and with taking money from the avowed enemies of England to support their political plans. This time it was one of the Irish members who moved that he be declared guilty of a breach of privilege, and in doing so he made a savage attack on Mr. Bright. Mr. Bright had come down from Rochdale, whither he had retired in serious ill-health, to meet the charge. He had been strongly advised that it was not requisite, but he had the old-fashioned idea of the obligations of members of the House, and held to the tradition that it was the duty of the most eminent among them to justify his course when challenged in due form by even the most insignificant. But if his motive in appearing in the House, at considerable personal risk, was one of respect to the House, his speech was as frank and unqualified as it had ever been upon the platform. In the course of his remarks, he said: "Suppose that I had said the contrary of what I did say. Suppose that I had told my audience that the Irish in the House of Commons really condemned, in strong and emphatic language, continually all who committed those great crimes,—suppose that I had said that they exhibited great grief at the violent and murderous crimes constantly committed in Ireland,—what would the House, or what would the Irish themselves, have said or thought? They would have said that I was a fool, or worse, for making statements that were absolutely untrue." If he had committed any breach of privilege of the House, he was ready to express his regret, but as to the truth of what he said, "nothing in the world will induce me to withdraw an atom of it." The motion was finally abandoned.

But while Mr. Bright was thus profoundly moved by the state of things in Ireland, and particularly by what he regarded as the efforts of a disloyal organization, led by ambitious politicians, to deceive the Irish people, he was still confident of the final result. "I do not," he wrote in October, 1883, to Mr. Harry O'Brien, author of "Fifty Years of Concessions to Ireland,"—"I do not take so gloomy a view as many speakers and writers do. I believe in just measures, and in their effect, and in time and patience, and I am ready to hope that within a reasonable period we shall see a change for the better in Irish affairs."

In the mean while, before the Irish question became the absolutely absorbing one, the question of the suffrage and its extension engaged the attention of the country, and in the elections that turned practically upon this Mr. Bright, though he did

not speak so frequently as had been his custom, expressed and advocated his views with great clearness and emphasis. He was, of course, in entire sympathy with the general policy of the Liberal party, and had been all his life a believer in, and even a partisan of, the broadest practicable basis of suffrage. But he was at heart an Englishman, with the sturdy conservatism of his race. He believed broadly in the justice and expediency, in the theoretical rightness and in the peculiar safety of a free and full expression of the popular will ; but he was averse to experiments, he had no fondness for change for the sake of change, he was attached to old customs because they were old customs, and was reluctant to abandon or modify them unless it was clear to him that there was a sufficient reason therefor. In these qualities he was quite different from his life-long friend and co-worker Mr. Cobden, whose intellect was more acute and more daring, and who was more ready to follow its dictates, so that it was a saying of Mr. Cobden's that Mr. Bright always had to make the closing speech in meetings where both were present, and to provide the final impression, his sympathy with the average English audience being much stronger and more hearty. When, therefore, during the canvass upon the electoral reform bill, Mr. Bright was approached upon any of the conceptions that were naturally rife at the time for developing minutely the representation of special classes, or providing for anything but the general rule of the majority, he gave very characteristic responses. In October, 1883, he was asked to sanction a plan proposed by Mr. Charles Seely, by which, after a House of 600 members had been chosen by the ordinary methods, the members thus chosen were to elect 60 more. The plea by which Mr. Seely supported this plan was that it would give a chance to secure in the House of Commons a certain number of men of high intelligence and real ability for public affairs, who, because of their lack of physical or other qualification for public speaking, would not be likely to seek a popular election, or would be unsuccessful if they did. Mr. Bright replied : " Men feeble in health, and men not able or willing to go through the ordeal of an appeal to a constituency, may take other means of serving the public ; the Parliamentary path is not their path, and to open a new gate for those incapable of making use of the ancient and constitutional road is a proposition not seriously to be regarded. Parliament has already an abundant supply of clever men, men who can both think and talk. We need no new plan of admitting feeble folk, feeble in body and in voice, and in the power and qualities which recommend men to the notice and confidence of electors. I advise you to keep to the old ways ; the new fads, minority clauses, and new modes of making a Parliament all tend to mischief ; they show mistrust of the people, and they are mainly intended to weaken

the popular voice." Being questioned as to whether in this sharp characterization he meant to include the plan of Mr. Hare for representation of minorities by means of the cumulative vote, he responded :

"I think Mr. Hare's plan more of a 'fad' than any other yet submitted to the public, and it has this disadvantage—that scarcely any one can understand it. It aims at making Parliament an exact photograph of every phase of public opinion, and under it there is no fancy or folly which might not, and probably would not, have its representatives in the House. Parliament would be broken up into busy cliques led by the political lunatics who would have entrance within its walls."

It may be said, as indeed it was said by able advocates of minority representation, that this was a very inadequate and even an unjust view of their plan. But it cannot be denied that it was characteristic of Mr. Bright, and that it was quite in harmony with his method of thought and work. He had profound confidence in the general body of the people, and he had the utmost respect for Parliament as a governing body. But he firmly believed that Parliament must be kept in harmony with the people, and that its action, in order to be efficient, must have the support of the majority of the people. It was an instrument for certain important work, and was not and ought not to be an originating body acting on its own ideas. Moreover Mr. Bright knew that practically the key to parliamentary control was the possession of a majority. Its final function was to formulate a simple Yes or No, and that could be done only by a majority. There was no means of giving effect to minorities in the final vote upon a measure, and he did not care to waste the time of the House in listening to arguments from "busy cliques" on points or plans that could lead to no result. The greatest triumphs of his own public labors—and they had been of incalculable importance—had been won in the "old ways," on "the ancient and constitutional road," and he had little patience with those who were not content with these. At this time, also, Mr. Bright, with all the leaders of the Liberal party, was very much tried by the obstructive tactics of the Irish minority, and looked with disapproval and some irritation on the multiplication of possible sources of like trouble.

Before passing to the consideration of the Irish question, or to the later Home-rule phase of that question, which was practically to fill the remainder of Mr. Bright's public life, it is, perhaps, worth citing a brief letter he wrote in October, 1884, in response to an application to give his support to an application for closing the post-offices and omitting the delivery of mail matter on the Sabbath. Mr. Bright was a profoundly religious man. Not only the course of his life, but very many of his

utterances evince the spirit of deepest reverence, and there is probably no English statesman since the days of the Commonwealth to whom the Bible was so prolific and so intimate a source of influence. He was as familiar with it as with his alphabet, and his style may be said to be more shaped by it than by any other reading. Not only the simplicity and solidity of that style, but its poetry, its sober picturesqueness, and its occasional solemnity and subdued splendor are obviously connected with his scriptural reading. But he was in no sense a narrow sectarian, and the belief of his denomination that inspiration had not spoken its last word with the Hebrews is accountable, also, for the firmness and independence with which he brought to bear on the affairs of life his own conscience, the "inner light" of his own mind. "To close all our post-offices on Sunday," he wrote, "would, in my view, be not only an intolerable inconvenience, but a great evil." And after alluding to the great number of young persons in London, absent from their homes, for whom Sunday was the only day of rest from labor, who were accustomed to receive their home letters on that day, and to reply to them, he concluded: "The one round of the postman in the day is not a heavy burden, not heavier than is borne by great numbers in almost every class in life. It is a great public service, an honorable labor, and it must be compensated for as their services are. There is not a word in the New Testament leading to your views, so far as they are influenced by religious considerations."

CHAPTER XLIX.

HOME RULE.

Home Rule—Mr. Bright's Position in 1872—Mr. Gladstone's Measures.—Mr. Bright to his Electors—An Alternative Plan—The Breach with Mr. Gladstone—Mr. Bright's Oratory—His Feeling for the United States.

"I ASKED my calm judgment and my conscience what was the path of right to take. They pointed it out to me with an unerring finger, and I am humbly endeavoring to follow it." These were the words used by Mr. Bright in 1882, when he felt it his duty to resign his place in Mr. Gladstone's cabinet because he could not agree with the policy in Egypt that led to the bombardment of Alexandria. That they were sincere no one who knew him could doubt, and Mr. Gladstone followed the announcement with a brief but eloquent and feeling tribute to his colleague. Neither of them could at that moment have imagined that within a few years their "paths of right" were to diverge completely, never again to unite, and that, too, upon a question as to which they had so long and earnestly labored together, and had encountered in common so much obloquy and some danger. On the Home-rule phase of the Irish question, Mr. Bright's position had been taken early, and had been consistently maintained. In January, 1872, when he was at the very height of his popularity, when he was regarded as the radical champion of the rights of Ireland, and long before Mr. Gladstone had fully approached him in his view of what those rights were, Mr. Bright had written the following letter :

ROCHDALE, January 20, 1872.

MY DEAR O'DONOGHUE : It is said that some persons engaged in the canvass for the County Kerry have spoken of me as an advocate of what is termed Home-rule in Ireland. I hope no one has ventured to say anything so absurd and untrue. If it has been said by any one of any authority in the country, I shall be glad if you will contradict it. To have two representative legislative assemblies of Parliament in the United Kingdom would be in my opinion an intolerable mischief, and I think no sensible man can wish for two within the limits of the present United Kingdom, who does not wish the United Kingdom to become two or more nations, entirely separated from each other. Excuse me for troubling you with this. It is no duty of mine to interfere with your contest, but I do not wish to be misrepresented.—I am, very truly yours,

JOHN BRIGHT.

The time had now come for Mr. Bright to apply this principle so definitely and emphatically stated, at a crisis that could

not be evaded, and in a manner that cost him more in every way than any other act of his public life.

On the 8th of April, 1886, Mr. Gladstone brought in his famous Irish measure. In brief, it may be said that it provided for a Parliament for Ireland, to meet in Dublin, to consist of 104 representative and elected Peers, and 204 members elected to the House of Commons. This Parliament was to deal with all purely Irish affairs. It was to have control of the police, and of the levying and disbursement of all internal taxes, but the control of the customs and of the army and navy were to be reserved to the British Parliament.

On the 16th of April, Mr. Gladstone also brought in his Land Purchase bill for Ireland. It provided, generally, for the purchase of land by tenants at a price equal to twenty years net rental, calculated on the year ending November 1, 1885. The purchase money was to be advanced by the imperial government at an interest the excess of which over the rate on consols would ultimately wipe out the principal, and this advance was secured by lien upon the land.

The debate that followed was the most exciting and notable that had taken place in the House since the original reform laws were enacted. Mr. Gladstone renewed his years, and with an energy, skill and mastery of his powers of debate that surprised his most ardent admirers, explained and sustained his policy. But for the first time in his half-century of public life the course of the Liberal party was abruptly broken. With variations of success and reverse before the country, that party had for more than the average lifetime of a generation advanced steadily along the same lines, at all times retaining the attachment of its most able and powerful members, and constantly gaining recruits from the younger men as they entered public life. But on this step, which the great leader believed was in the direction of the party course, the party was badly and apparently hopelessly divided. On the 4th of June, 1886, the Home-rule bill was rejected by the decisive vote of 341 noes to 311 ayes. Ninety-three of the Liberals voted against the bill, Mr. Bright among them. On the 24th of June, Parliament was dissolved, and writs were immediately issued for the new elections.

On the same day, Mr. Bright issued his letter to the electors of Central Birmingham. In the course of it he said: "Since November, a single question has occupied the attention of the House of Commons and of the country. It relates to the future government of Ireland, and consists of two bills, which were thrust upon Parliament and the country by the government. One of those bills was rejected; the other was withdrawn. We are not told by Mr. Gladstone, or his colleagues, how much or how little of these unfortunate proposals will reappear in the

next Parliament. We are asked to pledge ourselves to a principle which may be innocent or most dangerous, as may be explained in future bills.

"I cannot give such a pledge. The experience of the past three months has not increased my confidence in the wisdom of the administration or in its policy respecting the future government of Ireland. I will not pledge myself to a principle which I do not understand and cannot approve. In 1872 I wrote a letter to an Irish gentleman, from which I extract this short sentence: 'To have two legislative assemblies in the United Kingdom would work intolerable mischief. No sensible man can wish for two such assemblies who does not wish that the kingdom shall become two or more nations entirely separate from each other.' My vote in the recent division has given great grief, but my judgment and conscience made the other course impossible. For forty years, I have been a friend of Ireland. Long before any Parnellite now in Parliament or any member of the present government opened his lips to expose and condemn the wrongs of Ireland, I spoke for her people in the House of Commons and on public platforms. It is because I am still a friend of Ireland, that I refuse to give her up to those to whom the recently rejected bill would have subjected her."

On the 1st of July, Mr. Bright appeared before his constituents at Birmingham, and made an extended defense of his course, and a determined attack upon the government. He recited the measures that had been enacted to satisfy the just claims and to invite the friendly confidence of the Irish people. The land laws had been radically reformed in accordance with a principle that was a substantial departure, in the interest of the tenants, from that that governed contracts in England, or, indeed, in any other modern country. The arrears act had provided still further concessions in the same direction. The burden of the support of the Established Church, in deference to the sentiments of the Irish people had been abolished. These things had been done through the action of the common legislature, in which the representation of the Irish people was ample in proportion to their number, and by which far more time and labor had been given to legislation for Ireland than for any part of the United Kingdom. In Parliament the representatives of Ireland were chosen by household suffrage on conditions certainly as favorable to the Irish people as those enjoyed by any other citizens of the Empire.

In the course of this address Mr. Bright outlined an alternative plan for the settlement of Irish questions (*vide* report of the *London Times*). "A permanent committee of Irish members may be formed, and that Irish bills after the first reading be referred to this committee. The committee shall have a special

place of meeting at Westminster, appoint its own chairman, and have power to decide whether a bill is acceptable. No English or Scotch member shall be appointed on the committee. The House shall have the power to consider a bill only on the report of the committee. He admitted that the plan was simple, and depended upon the honest working of the Irish party in the House of Commons. Assuming that there was a moderate loyal spirit in the Irish party, the plan would succeed, but if the Irish party were unloyal, neither this nor the government plan would succeed. His suggestion might be called one of the unexhausted resources of civilization, which should be tried before they capitulated to one of the worst conspiracies that ever affected any country."

Undoubtedly this "alternative proposition" submitted by Mr. Bright was suggested by the natural criticism of the course of the Liberal Unionists, that they rejected Mr. Gladstone's plan while submitting none of their own. In this sense it may be regarded as a political device rather than a deliberate and responsible act of statesmanship. It is probable that it had a certain effect upon public opinion, and that it thus served its real purpose. No attempt was made, when the Conservatives and Liberal Unionists secured a majority in the House of Commons, to carry it into effect, and it is not unlikely that it would be found open to grave practical difficulties if it were put in practice. Certainly it went as far as it was possible to go in the direction of home-rule without establishing an Irish Parliament. It gave to the representatives of the Irish people in the House a complete and absolute veto upon the action of the House. It may be said, indeed, to have legalized the power of obstruction that had been so long abused by the Irish members, and the abuse of which, as has been already shown, had excited Mr. Bright's indignation in an extreme manner. In thus legalizing that power, Mr. Bright may have hoped that it would be possible to impose responsibility for its exercise, and to withdraw the other than Irish business of the House from exposure to it. Whether that would have been the result would have depended, as he himself acknowledged, upon the good faith, the moderation, and the loyalty of the Irish party. And it is clear that these were the conditions precedent to the success of any plan whatever. It may be said in favor of Mr. Bright's plan, as compared with that of Mr. Gladstone, that if the former failed, and had to be abandoned, it would still leave the Parliament of the United Kingdom in undivided and undisputed possession of its original complete authority. It did not involve in any degree the integrity of the Empire, or threaten it. It was a proposition for a method of using the power of Parliament in the interest and even under the direction of the Irish representatives. It was

not a proposition to part with any portion of that power. If it became necessary, a committee of the House, such as Mr. Bright suggested, could be abolished, and its peculiar functions resumed and redistributed by the House of Commons, much more readily than an Irish Parliament, exercising the power of internal taxation and of internal police, could be abolished.

It was at this point unquestionably that the firmest convictions and the deepest sentiments of Mr. Bright made themselves felt. He regarded the House of Commons of the United Kingdom as the one hope of the whole people. He had said, in discussing the suffrage, in 1883 : "I believe, if you can not get a good government with a representation based upon household franchise, mainly or generally, that a good government is not to be had by the people of this country." The *Spectator*, which can not be counted among his ardent admirers, said of him : "Mr. Bright has always desired to enlarge the political greatness of the House of Commons by increasing the popular force which it expresses and the weight of character which it represents." That the House of Commons, for the perfecting and development of which he had labored so many years, and against such great obstacles, should, at the moment when the conditions for its greatest usefulness had been secured, as he believed, be split up, that a large portion of what he regarded as its integral powers should be taken away from it and transferred to a Dublin Parliament, whose motives, purposes, and tendencies would be separatist and not national, he could not but think would be a fatal blunder.

Moreover, at heart Mr. Bright was both conservative and patriotic, though the bitterest gibes to which he had been exposed in public life were directed to his alleged radicalism and the lukewarmness of his love for his country. By nature, his conservatism was patriotic and his patriotism was conservative. He believed, with an ardor not unlike that of religious faith, that the English system of responsible representative government, in which the deliberate will of the whole people should find ultimate expression in progressive legislation and in orderly and just administration, was the wisest, the most hopeful, and the most fruitful system that existed. Even in his earliest years, when the suffrage was narrow and corrupt, when Parliament was deeply subservient to class privilege, and the laws seemed to maintain in cruel domination evils of the grossest and most oppressive character, and when he was engaged in open and heated warfare against these evils, his mind never gave a sign of a revolutionary or subversive tendency. His faith in the justice and rectitude of the cause in which he fought was not more firm than his confidence that it would triumph through the influence of public opinion, in the "old ways," upon the House of Com-

mons, the established and sufficient organ of all national action. As we have seen, as early as 1872 he had denounced the statement that he favored home-rule in Ireland as "absurd and untrue," and he had declared his complete and unchangeable conviction that to divide Parliament was to divide the nation. Against any such proposition his whole nature rebelled. Whatever difficulties, inconveniences, contradictions, he saw in the terms or in the practical operation of specific plans for this division, the controlling fact in them was the division itself. That appeared to him to be laying sacrilegious and destructive hands upon the ark of the covenant of the liberty of the whole British people.

The elections of 1886 resulted adversely to Mr. Gladstone. He had in the new House but 191 direct followers. Mr. Parnell secured 85, making on the Irish question 276, while the Conservatives elected 316, and the Union-Liberalists, with whom Mr. Bright acted, numbered 78. On the main question involved in the canvass the House was, therefore, divided between 394 anti-Gladstonians and 276 Gladstonians. Mr. Bright took no active part in the work of the House, though he supported, when he was able to be present, the policy of Lord Salisbury. To criticisms as to his adherence to the Government in the laws for the suppression of the National League, based on his former assertion that "force was no remedy," he wrote (Oct. 3): "Force is no remedy for just discontent, but it is a remedy, and often the only remedy, for disorder and violence against which our laws provide. I supported Mr. Gladstone's bills of 1881 and 1882 for the suppression of the Land League and disorder in Ireland, and I now support the Government in its efforts to suppress the National League, which is the Land League under another name. My sympathy for Ireland was not born of a faction in a struggle for place and pay. It was as strong as it now is thirty years ago, before Messrs. Gladstone, Harcourt, and Morley and their noisy followers had a word to say in favor of the Irish tenantry. I would, with my sympathy for Ireland, save the population from the future conduct of men who are answerable for much of the present suffering and all the disorder with which the country is now afflicted and disgraced."

It was impossible, with Mr. Bright's temperament, that the differences that had arisen between him and Mr. Gladstone should not give cause for resentment. The tone of the words just cited prevailed in many of his utterances. It was natural, and perhaps it was justified, but it was impossible that Mr. Gladstone should not be wounded and offended by it. A number of letters passed between them. Mr. Bright was forced to admit, and he did so with candor and dignity, that some of his expressions had been extreme and some of his statements not fully

sustained by the facts. "I grieve," he wrote, on the 16th of June, 1877, to Mr. Gladstone, "that I can not act with you as in years past, but my judgment and conscience forbid it. If I have said a word that seems harsh or unfriendly, I will ask you to forgive it." This was undoubtedly his general feeling toward his former associate and leader, but the breach between them was really too wide and deep to be bridged over. Their respective attitudes were determined by the character of the mind of each. Both may be regarded as equally sincere and equally patriotic. Both, indeed, may be said to have had the same object in view as certainly as when they were working together. But the mind of Mr. Bright was more simple and more direct, less pliant and less subtle than that of Mr. Gladstone. The latter may be conceded to be the greater statesman. His power over his countrymen has a wider scope, more varied influence, and a greater range of sympathy. He has in larger measure the adaptability of the politician, and is more capable of seeming to follow that he may ultimately lead. His hold upon his convictions is less tenacious and his relation to the cause or causes that he advocates less consistent. Mr. Bright acted and spoke from a depth of sentiment and of intellectual persuasion not remotely tinged with the spirit of the Scriptures. To him the voice of his "judgment and conscience" was as the voice of the Lord. What it spake he would proclaim; what it directed he would do; what it forbade he would in no wise consent to, nor would he appear to compromise with it or to tolerate it. To his countrymen he would submit appeal and argument, eloquent, impassioned, ingenious, painstaking, minute, but if his countrymen would not go with him, he would go on alone. His was the leadership of the prophet, who was ready, if need be, to be a martyr. It was not in any but a temporary manner, as dictated by the conditions of his time, political leadership. It may be conceded that his mind lacked breadth; it is doubtful if it could have had, with greater breadth, the same force.

At this point, a suggestion may be pardoned, as to one of the sources of his peculiar power as an orator. It was essentially his own, and it is not easy to recall any orator of his time who equaled it. That source was the Scriptures in the King James version. It is difficult to read any of his speeches, on occasions when he was deeply moved, without recognizing in the form and thought, in the language, in the rhythmical movement, the influence of the Bible, and of the Bible in the English of the period when English was in the splendid prime of its mighty youth, enriched by the magnificence and charm of the Shakspearean era and informed by the energy of the first great outburst of religious freedom. But it was the spirit of the Scriptures, not their language only, nor yet their doctrinal teach-

ing, as ordinarily understood, that exerted this subtle and powerful influence upon the mind of Mr. Bright. It is permissible, perhaps, to seek, in some degree, the explanation of this influence in the attitude toward the Scriptures of the Society of Friends, of which Mr. Bright was a member and to which reference has already been made. That attitude was devout and reverent, but not narrow. To them the Scriptures contained a Divine revelation, but not the only revelation, and it was the central idea of their faith that the Lord remained ever accessible and present to the human race, that the conscience, if kept "pure and undefiled," was at least an approximate and the nearest expression of His law, and that it was a sacred duty at once to search the conscience humbly and carefully, and to follow its details at every cost. Without trenching upon the field of theological speculation, it may be suggested that this was an intellectual attitude calculated both to keep the mind open to the most intimate and elevating influence of the Scriptures, and to leave unimpaired, or, indeed, to arouse, its original and individual activity. At least, the present writer, who has followed the course of Mr. Bright with deep interest for a quarter of a century, was early impressed with this phase of his intellectual development, and, on suggesting it to some of Mr. Bright's countrymen, who were familiar with him personally, was not displeased to find it confirmed.

Mr. Bright maintained to the last his keen sympathetic interest in the welfare of the American Republic. The preceding pages contain an account of his devoted and eloquent and effective advocacy of the cause of the Union during the desperate and finally triumphant struggle for its preservation. The emancipation of the slaves, in the course of the war, freed the United States from the one obstacle that had existed to his hearty admiration for the principles of American institutions. For the institutions themselves he had respect, but he never manifested any tendency toward Republicanism for his own country. The notion of federation as a substitute for a national Parliament, and as a means of providing for the relations of England to her widely scattered colonies, had no attractions for him. He did not hesitate to pronounce it "impracticable and absurd." But he believed that the English-speaking peoples, in all quarters of the globe, had a common heritage in the principles of liberty, justice, and order, in representative government, and in the possibilities of progress that these presented. He felt the deepest pride in this heritage, the utmost confidence in its value for the human race, and the profoundest sense of the obligation imposed by its possession. He never lost an opportunity to impress upon his own and upon the American people the essential unity of destiny involved in the community of principles. One of his

latest communications addressed to the people of the United States was on the occasion of the visit of a delegation of members of Parliament to the United States, to urge upon the American Government the formation of a permanent alliance between Great Britain and the United States, to promote arbitration as the means of settling international disputes.

There was but one feature of the political policy of the United States that invited severe and frequent condemnation from Mr. Bright,—its “protective” tariff,—and on this he expressed himself frequently, even in the later years of his life. But it was always in a friendly manner. He regarded it as an error due to national youth. He understood very clearly how very greatly the conditions differed in the United States and in England; that the question of the cost of food was only indirectly and partially involved; that America enjoyed all the advantages of absolute free trade in its internal exchanges, embracing a vast range of products, resources of the most unlimited variety, and a population constantly spreading and, at even a more rapid rate, developing those resources. He recognized also, as did Mr. Gladstone and other responsible leaders of English opinion, that when England’s “kin beyond the sea” should choose to break the trammels voluntarily imposed upon their foreign commerce, England could no longer retain permanently the enormous advantage she had gained in the world’s commerce by her advanced system. But while he saw that her relative share would be reduced, he believed that her absolute share would continue to increase, and that the prosperity of the whole race would be greatly promoted by this increase in the freedom of the exercise of its energies.

Mr. Bright had been in feeble health for several years, when in the spring of 1888 he was obliged to retire permanently to his home at “One Ash,” Rochdale. His sturdy constitution, preserved by his pure life and regular habits, enabled him to resist with remarkable vigor the progress of disease. During the month of February, 1889, he rallied so much as to give hope that he might again take an interest, if not a part, in public affairs. But it was not to be, and on the morning of the 27th of March Mr. Bright passed away calmly and without any sign of suffering. His death made a profound impression in all circles of society. There was a proposition, very natural under the circumstances, that he shall be laid in Westminster Abbey, but though a memorial may be erected to him in that historic place, his earthly remains are interred in the peaceful burying-ground of the Society of Friends at Rochdale. This was in accordance with his own views, which, despite the illustrious part he had played, and the high regard in which he knew himself to be held, always inclined toward the utmost simplicity. Mr. Bright’s

death was announced in the House of Commons by Mr. Smith, the ministerial leader, with great emotion. Out of consideration for Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Smith postponed his remarks on the event until Mr. Gladstone could be present, a sufficiently striking indication of how deeply Mr. Bright was respected and beloved by men of all parties.

THE END.

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